

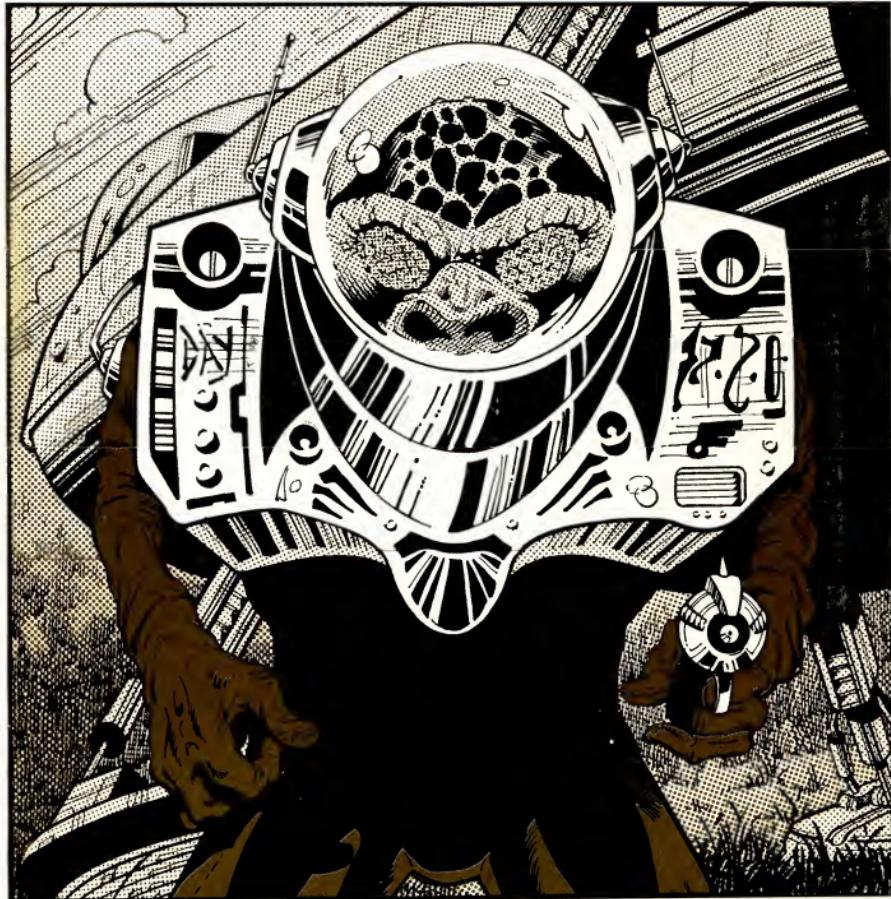
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THRUST

SF in
review

FALL 1978 NO. 11 \$1.50

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SF in review

no. 11

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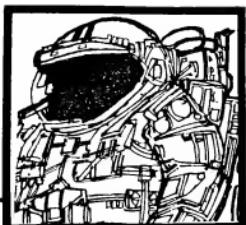
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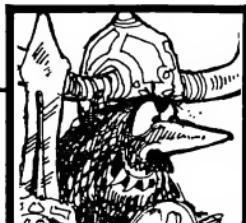
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Fall 1978



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THE ALIENATED CRITIC



AN
EDITORIAL
by the editor

DOUG FRATZ

I got a pleasantly surprising amount of response from my mention last issue that I am running THRUST at a huge deficit. It's genuinely good to know that there are so many readers out there who appreciate what we're trying to do here, and I'd like to thank everyone for the money, encouragement and sympathy, in that order.

And once again I'll state, I have no intention of folding THRUST. I've got publishing in my blood now, and not even the frustration of being the only person in this boom period of science fiction to be losing money in the field is enough to stop me.

Anyway, welcome to THRUST, the science fiction review magazine that has been known to jump up from behind and mug people if they aren't looking.

The most notable addition this issue is John Shirley and his column, "Paranoid Critical Statements," which previously ran in the now defunct SCINTILLATION. John will most certainly add distinctively to THRUST's atmosphere of healthy salooners. John joins THRUST on the eve of a major up-swing in his career. He's signed a two year contract with the Scott Keratin agency, and has sold several novels. The first will be released by Zebra Books in November. It's a visionary adventure called *Transmanacon*, and will have a cover by Clyde Caldwell. His next novel is entitled *City Come-a Walkin'*.

The most notable loss this issue is Dan Steffan as art editor. I've had to take over the job myself, and made every effort this issue to uphold the graphic standards set by Dan. The need for real money forced Dan to move on, and he is now working on numerous assignments, including various underground comix strips and commercial artwork. I did manage to squeeze one piece out of Dan for this issue: the illustration for Ted White's "My Column."

Yes, Ted's still with us (I'm not going to get rid of him until I'm, you know, *really* big), and this issue he takes a look at music in science fiction and science fiction in

music. Ted now spends most of his time in the field of music, as a dj for a local rock station and music columnist for a local arts paper. Ted also continues to edit AMAZING and FANTASTIC (both now back to bi-monthly schedules) and has recold some of his old novels, including *Secret of the Marauder Satellite*, an of juvenile to Berkley. And, *Forbidden World*, the new novel by Ted White and Dave Blechhoff, will be out in December from Popular Library.

Dave continues with his column this issue, once again attempting to stir up some controversy in his usual quiet and disarmingly polite manner.

The Ellison Affair, by the way, ends with this issue. Over, dead, kaput. It was fun and all, but everything that needed to be said was said (and more) and it's done. I never really meant this to blow up into such a big thing, and am even slightly embarrassed that it did. I was deluged with commentary on the subject, much of it angry responses directed at Charles. But Mr. Sheffield will continue writing for THRUST, if in less controversial veins. This issue sees the start of his new column, "From the Painted Urn." Charles' first novel, by the way, will finally be appearing from Ace in September. Pick it up. It promises to be an excellent novel, and hopefully it will quiet some of THRUST's readers who wrote angry letters denigrating his writing abilities.

Chris Lampton missed his deadline again, but his "Eclectic Company" will definitely appear next issue, concluding his topic of authors in the mainstream. Chris is delayed with writing obligations, and his new novel, *Gateway to Limbo* will be appearing in March from Doubleday.

You may notice that there is no column on sexism by Jessica Amanda Salmonson, which I mentioned as a possibility last issue. Jessica decided against doing the column for various reasons. The strange thing is, I received a huge volume of heated response, both pro and con, just by mentioning the possibility of the column appearing. Lord knows what would have happened had it actually appeared. Sexism is a very touchy subject in sf fandom these days...

I won't be going to the Worldcon in Phoenix this year (although this issue of THRUST will be there, and some of you reading this now may be in Phoenix) for various reasons, including lack of time. In regard to this fact, I took the opportunity to write the following letter, and send copies of it to the Adams Hotel and the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce:

Dear Sirs:

As owner of Thrust Publications and publisher and editor of THRUST - SCIENCE FICTION IN REVIEW, I would normally be attending, along with several members of my staff, the 36th World Science Fiction Convention, which is being held this year at the Adams Hotel in Phoenix, Arizona.

This year, however, neither I nor any other members of my editorial staff will be present.

Thrust Publications is joining numerous other groups and individuals in the science fiction writing and publishing community in an effort to withhold money from the merchants and governments of the state of Arizona, in protest of its lack of ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

As a publisher, editor and writer in the field of science fiction literature, I am constantly forced to contemplate the future which we as a society are creating, and a society which does not recognize and guarantee the equal rights of all its citizens is not a society in which I care to contemplate my children living.

Yours truly,
D. Douglas Fratz

I hope other sf fans who, for whatever reason, are unable to attend Igauanacan have taken the opportunity to write similar letters. It is rare, indeed, that we, as members of the sf community, are able to take any sort of stand regarding affairs in the real world, the world we have to live in. Harlan is right, it's time we started.

In fact, it's still not too late. I'd like to urge all of THRUST's readers who didn't make it to Arizona to



THRUST

write similar letters now. It may have little effect, or none at all, but it's something.

Well, the age of the test tube baby has arrived, and the real world goes through another bout of future shock, while those of us who have been reading about it for years shrug and say, what else is new? Mundanes certainly do excite easily. I can't wait to see what an uproar is created when the first infant is born from a host-mother.

Getting back to *THRUST*, the sf comic strip (or graphic story, or whatever) this issue was squeezed out, but that was the only other major casualty. It will be here next issue.

There are three interviews this issue. I originally planned to do a really long, in-depth interview with Theodore Sturgeon, whom I planned to meet at Unicon where he was a recent Guest of Honor. I really wanted to do that interview—Ted Sturgeon is one of science fiction's most thought-provoking writers. But every circumstance worked against me, and I was unable to do the interview. So instead, I bought an excellent interview with Sturgeon by Larry Duncan, an interview in which I participated to some degree, and two more interviews with Joe Haldeman and C. J. Cherryh. My disappointment in not being able to do my Sturgeon interview lead me to glutony.

So what about the future? There will always be changes, but I'm relatively set for the long haul. I do want to add one more major columnist, and when the money's right, I'll be able, hopefully, to start contracting major pieces of nonfiction from well known writers as well.

And with any luck, this may be the last bi-yearly issue of *THRUST*. Next issue may start a quarterly schedule.

I've been publishing *THRUST* on a twice yearly schedule for two reasons, both intimately connected with each other: lack of time and lack of money. To put it simply, I can't publish this magazine more than twice a year while I'm losing money and while I'm doing most of the work myself.

I have a typist this issue, and will on all future issues, which cuts my final production time by one third. With each new issue, the columnists are becoming more and more self-sufficient, needing less editing help from me. More time saved. A major time consumer has been distribution—I spend almost half of my time on distribution—but I have hopes that I will have a solution to the wholesale selling problems by next issue, i.e. a wholesale distributor.

The money problem also shows signs of decline. Advertisers are starting to notice *THRUST*—advertising revenue is essential if *THRUST* is to go quarterly—and I plan to keep *THRUST*'s rates the lowest in the field to encourage growth. The magazine is selling extremely well on the stands, especially in the sf specialty shops. Subscriptions are adding up slowly but surely, and it's just a matter of time.

Next issue will be out in March. I'll give my next state of the union address then.

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THE THEODORE STURGEON INTER- VIEW!!

by
larry duncan
with doug fratz and arthur henderson

Mr. Sturgeon is one of our most notable writers of science fiction and fantasy, but his stories often defy and escape our classifications. His novel *More Than Human* won the International Fantasy Award in 1954, and his 1970 story "Slow Sculpture" won both the Nebula and Hugo awards. He is presently working on a movie version of *More Than Human* and a "mainstream" novel to be entitled *Godbody*. His many stories from the later 1930's to the present have enriched our reading with a grace of style and a humanistic spirit uniquely his own. Mr. Sturgeon's tact, wit, and generous nature -- despite the difficult circumstances of place (beside a noisy kitchen door) and of time (on his way to the airport) -- may be easily observed in the following interview.

THRUST: Mr. Sturgeon, as an author and artist who does his best thinking imaginatively, how do you react to the analytical picking and prodding of critical and academic types?

STURGEON: I learn a great deal from them.

THRUST: Do you recall the original event, image, or idea that started you working on *More Than Human*?

STURGEON: Yeah, I was reading a novel by Pearl Buck called *Pavilion of Women*. Now, it was many years ago -- and I forgot the novel -- but there was one thing in it. It was a monk, a Chinese monk, who was back in the bush and a whole passel of little, abandoned kids that he was living with in a kind of cave. And that image stuck with me. It started there. I mean that was the take-off point. "Baby Is Three" was written first. A year later Farrar Straus asked me for a novel, and the only novel I wanted to write was where they came from and where they went to. So I wrote thirty thousand words about where they came from and thirty thousand words about where they went to. And they asked me, earlier, to write them as discrete novelettes that might be sold on their own. And so that's how I tried to do it. Now, how anything like that could be cobbled together into a structured novel, I don't know. But when it's published in Hungary, next spring, that will be its eighteenth language. There are even four Japanese editions. To me, it's absolutely astonishing -- you don't write books like that, that's not how you plan a novel.

THRUST: Do you recall any special problems you had in working out the plot, theme, characters, or style?

STURGEON: Not particularly. I did make an effort -- as I usually do -- to continually alter the styles in which I write. To me, a writer who develops a style, whether it's Steinbeck, Hemingway, Bradbury -- Bradbury particularly -- you can go a long way in the author business that way. But it is also limiting. If you know literature well enough, you can sit down and write a paragraph of pure Steinbeck, or a paragraph of pure Bradbury -- you can't write one of his stories; I'm not saying that, but his style -- but let's see you sit down and write a paragraph (a pure paragraph) of Samuel R. Delany. No way. Can't be done. The man is such a master of changing styles. And I admire that. I do try to do that.

THRUST: During the early 1950's, a large number of science fiction stories featured children with special gifts or problems -- "children of wonder," to use William Tenn's phrase. Do you have any ideas about why, since you participated in that?

STURGEON: Well, I've had any number of children -- fifty-three or two, or twenty-seven, or how many was there? No, I've had seven kids. Now, being logically contentious, I've spread them over a couple of generations. My oldest is about thirty-eight now? Or maybe Patty's not that old.. Thirty-seven, something like that. My youngest is eight. So I have spread it out. And I have always found children miraculous. Anybody who's ever had a child knows that if you study the book, and learn the rules and so on, you should be able to raise the child, and the child, of course, re-instructs you, and you find out the exceptions. So by the time your second child comes along, you know how to do it. You're wrong, man. you're wrong -- all down the line. Well Cynthia was my second, and she proved it to me. It's only till the third one comes along that you realize that it's a highly individual thing. Their psychology, their biochemistry, everything about them is totally different. And they're miraculous. And it's that miracle they feed back to me. I've a great ambience with children. They can always get a smile out of me -- instantly, the newborn. And I get along fine with them at all ages.

THRUST: Did you find any inspiration along these lines from Henry Kuttner's stories about children as aliens, or the "other"?

STURGEON: No, not particularly. It may, possibly, have worked the other way around.

THRUST: I was wondering about "Mimsy Were the Borogoves," because I always connect that story with your stories for some reason.

STURGEON: Yeah, I know. Some people do. He had pretty much the same attitudes as I -- although, I don't think he ever had any kids.

THRUST: Did you do much background reading in psychology or parapsychology for the novel, or did you read just enough to get by on?

STURGEON: I tell you, I have a fairly "sticky" head; I read everything I can get my hands on. And, naturally, a lot of it has been in psychology, and parapsychology, and mysticism, and religions, and com-

parative religions, and things like -- they've always interested me.

THRUST: In all three parts of the novel, the central characters must free themselves from parental figures -- a normal process in growing up and achieving a personal identity. Lone has to free himself from the Prodds, Gerry has to free himself from Miss Kew, Miss Kew unsuccessfully tries to free herself from her father, and Hip has to free himself from his --

STURGEON: That's very perceptive of you. I don't know if I've ever consciously driven down that line. But, yes, it's in there. I had a tremendous time drawing away myself. I ran away from home when I was sixteen and went to sea -- a very conventional thing for a writer to do.

THRUST: I was wondering if you were conscious of planning that pattern, or it just happened?

STURGEON: No. No. Writing, as I explained to somebody earlier, is a way of getting even with people. I

THE LOVER & THE BARBARIAN

steve brown

On a Friday night, at an sf convention called Unicon, twelve people took Theodore Sturgeon out to dinner. It was the first time that I received an actual benefit from my nicotine habit. The table was separated into smoking and non-smoking, and all the writers smoked (Sturgeon on a pipe). For me the potential energy was almost tangible, seated as I was between Sturgeon, one of my life-long favorite writers, and Lin Carter, one of my least favorite. Carter and Sturgeon spent most of two hours in intense dialogue with occasional comments by Jane Sturgeon, Sylvia Starshine, and myself. The conversation began as tedious shop-talk (editors I have known, etc.), but soon ranged much further, ending up a polarized argument about love, jealousy, and the strange ways humans demonstrate their attractions.

To me (not at all an impartial observer) the pattern of the conversation quickly became that of Carter defending his self-centric American Male conditionings against Sturgeon's eloquent ideals. Carter: "I firmly believe that anyone who hasn't made up his mind about the Big Questions (is there a God? What is Love? etc.) by age 16, and who doesn't hold those views for the rest of his life, whether he is right or wrong is a wishy-washy nobody, is doomed to flit aimlessly through life." Emphasis and pronouns are Carter's. Sturgeon: "But Lin, you're totally wrong. When someone stops asking questions, at precisely that point, they are dead, and spend the rest of their lives as walking zombies." Sturgeon's registered trademark is the letter "Q" with an arrow through it, meaning "ask the next question".

Then the conversation became more specific. Carter was adamant in his beliefs about jealousy. He insisted that he is proud of the fact that he is a jealous man. When Sturgeon tried to diplomatically point out the inconsistency of such a philosophy (insofar as Carter was accompanied by a pretty 17 year old girl he had just met, and had a permanent lover at home), Carter began to waffle, skirting the point that he thought it was somehow different for him than for his lover. Whereupon Jane Sturgeon leapt up and cried: "Bullshit!"

After listening to Carter tell of the various psychological damages he has done to himself (in his effort to totally shut out from his mind a lover with whom he has broken up) and to his ex-lovers, Sturgeon replied:

"But that's all so unnecessary Lin. Why shut someone out, when it is so easy to simply add them to your future experiences, and enrich your life. You can't love two people the same way, so they can only complement each other."

After a brief monologue on the evil effects of

jealousy, and the freedom enjoyed in its absence, Sturgeon tried to explain how Jane thinks through a metaphor.

Sturgeon: "When Jane meets someone for the first time, she holds out her hands, cupped, and says: 'Take a bead'. The person reaches into her hand and pulls one out. It is unattached and completely free from the other beads." Carter: (speaking in quick, bitten-off phrases, and punctuating his sentences with a forefinger forcibly slammed onto the table) "I need those strings. They've GOT to be there!"

The conversation went on for quite a while. Carter remained unconvinced, though gracious about it. The rest of us were enchanted at the sound of one of literature's foremost experts on love in all of its myriad variations discoursing on his specialty. He tried to tell people such simple, but immensely hard to understand, truths as no two people love the same way; jealousy is selfish and self-defeating ("Jealousy is the only sin that you can't have any fun with while committing."); it is easier to add old lovers to your experience rather than shut them out, thus enriching your life by the interior presence of both, there is no kind of mutual love that isn't innately beautiful.

Anyone who reads Sturgeon will learn more than they can imagine about the endless shades and twists of love. Anyone who reads Carter will be entertained, but will come away no wiser. The difference between a decent writer and a great one.

Theodore Sturgeon lives his work. His fiction is but a shadow thrown on paper of a man's life and central convictions. Carter is deeply involved with fantasy, but only as literature, in the abstract.

After dinner I headed down to the bathroom. Sturgeon was standing next to me. He leaned over and began to tell me that the art of conversation is one of the most important arts there is, but by its very nature ephemeral and irreproducible. Transcriptions, while getting all the words in the right place, leave out all the emotion and the unspoken by-plays (and paraphrased reproductions like this one are embarrassingly wide of the mark). He told me that in every good conversation there will occur (after two hours or so) four or five minutes of sublime intensity that can't be approached in any other medium. He also said that the previous conversation had produced at least three such moments.

When we walked back up into an empty dining room, the idiot with the accordion on stage was still playing his *musik*. Out in the middle of the deserted dance floor, Jane Sturgeon was dancing gracefully and very seriously with her ten year old son.

"I like people to be really struck dumb by wonder"

suppose every child tries to get even with his parents one way or another. Parents tend to do terrible things to their children.

THRUST: More Than Human is a novel that transcends the archetypal science fiction "ritual of passage" story. This novel, to me, seems to combine and invert the superman story with the transdimensional spiritual autobiography such as Augustine's Confessions. Do you think this is accurate? Or, just ...

STURGEON: Yes. That's a very nice sort of a -- I think in the true sense of the word -- appreciation. Which doesn't mean I like it. The true dictionary definition of a word "appreciation" is what you've done there. Yeah, I like it. It was part of the thing I mentioned in my speech today, the search for the optimum human being -- not the superman, who's a freak, but the optimum human being. And *Homo Gestalt* is a step in that direction.

THRUST: Did you do a lot of forethinking concerning this type of fictional form before you started writing, or did it just grow as you wrote?

STURGEON: No. As far as the fictional form -- as I say, the middle part was written in (I don't know) eleven days or so. The other two sections were written a year later over a period of about six weeks. And -- no, I made no pre-plans at all. Some of the best writing, as writing, is in the first section. The best structure is in the second section. The worst of the three sections is in the third section. It's -- it's a very strange book.

THRUST: Well, I think it's a formula novel that transcends the formulas. It's still alive after twenty-five years, especially for me. Why have you written no juvenile science fiction or series?

STURGEON: I don't know, it's a good question. I intend to.

THRUST: Obviously the "play" element is vital to science fiction and to the best science fiction stories, but this subject -- like "the wonder effect" -- has never really been thought out. They are more talked about than thought about. What are your thoughts on the "play" element and "the wonder effect" of science fiction?

STURGEON: You'll have to tell me what you mean by "the play element."

THRUST: Play -- like Fritz Leiber was talking about playing with his characters, and Larry Niven was talking about playing with ideas, and --

STURGEON: I see, yeah. Yes, play as connected with joy. Yes, I am very much interested in that. I love play and interplay of character. One thing that has always interested me is that one of the stodgiest people I've ever met in my life played a French horn for the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra under Stokowski and Eugene Normandy. The guy was so stuffy -- I don't think he actually wore a stiff shirt and stood shooting fish in the street, but he acted as if he did; and he was an unsmiling and very conservative individual. It occurred to me then (knowing him) that the man had overlooked the sense of the verb "to play." He played an instrument, but there was no playfulness about this man whatsoever -- none at all. And I think that the injection of play -- not comedy, I don't mean that. Comedy I have surprisingly little use for. I mean to go to a nightclub and watch some guy standing up, and everybody coming up with some strange series of spastic convulsions called laughter

(you know) when there's nothing to be remembered the next morning, at all; I can't understand this horrible thirst for it that the American public have -- that's not play. But play in this sense, yes, by all means; I'm for it.

THRUST: Do you recall any specific things you played around with in writing More Than Human.

STURGEON: Yes, I think so. I'm playing naive characters against sophisticated ones. I'm showing, too, that frequently the naive -- because he's more truthful -- will win out over the more sophisticated one, which is a formula that always has appealed to me. There's something about childlike, rather than childish, that appeals to me immensely. I like childlike adults, and I like honest people; I like women who come up to me and look me straight in the eye. One of the most beautiful and meaningful lines to me in all the world is in Joni Mitchell's song: "to say I love you right out loud." That really reaches me.

THRUST: About playing with word --

STURGEON: Oh my goodness yes! I'm an inveterate punster. It's in the blood, it goes back generations. I'm afraid my daughter has caught it too.

THRUST: Do you remember any special playing with language in More Than Human? That's a small thing to remember, but ...

STURGEON: Not specifically. However, there's a story of mine called "To Here and the Easel." It has a great deal of that. It's got more puns, and more multi-leveled puns, a sheer -- just playing with language.

THRUST: How about the wonder effect?

STURGEON: Now, again, you'll have to define what you mean by that -- the sense of wonder, the awe, the being struck dumb by some sunrise sort of thing?

THRUST: Yes, provoking a sense of wonder in the reader's mind, opening him up to wonder, a putting him in a sort of open state, as you do at the end of More Than Human with the revelation of the *Homo Gestalt*.

STURGEON: Yeah, I've always been vulnerable to that sense of wonder. I think it's somebody who watches a sunrise and feels that (for his reasons of macho) if he says anything at all, he's gotta say, "Ahh, shit, look" you know. Now, I can't see that. I like people to be really struck dumb by wonder -- to be moved by great chords of music, and by beauty, and by sensuous experiences.

THRUST: Do you react this way to music and books you read?

STURGEON: Oh yes! Yes, I certainly do.

THRUST: Anything outstanding?

STURGEON: I think that the greatest piece of music that I know of is Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor*, and the greatest rendition of that is by Leopold Stokowski and [their All American?]. Orchestra. I never heard that thing but I'm just moved absolutely profoundly. It's extraordinary -- like a great cathedral in construction -- an amazing thing. I love the way it ends in one gigantic discord. The whole thing was written in C minor, and after this discord it comes out with a tremendous full orchestra -- a hundred and

"Sometimes, I think the universe is a mind"

fifteen pieces on chord in C major -- and you go away feeling amazed (you know), a beautiful thing. Stokowski has -- some people have accused him of being (what's the word?) schmaltzy, you know.

THRUST: Overly romantic.

STURGEON: But let him be. I mean, in this case, he got it. I think he got what Bach felt when he wrote it -- a beautiful thing.

THRUST: Are you familiar with the writings of William Blake or Percy Bysshe Shelley on perceptual redemption, or cleansing the doors of perception, or restoring the golden age to a reader through the fabulous and fantastic in fiction and poetry?

STURGEON: Not specifically the writing. I'm familiar, of course, with their writing and particularly with Blake's drawings. I read something really fascinating about Blake. Apparently, there's a fraction of the blood, and -- I can't remember exactly what it was -- but the number seventeen sticks in my -- seventeen, citation, or something like that -- which is chemically almost identical to psilocybin*. And that this occurs -- it's one of those evanescent biochemicals that occurs and comes in the bloodstream, and then it's immediately changed into something else. Everybody manufactures this from time to time, and it's more in some people than it is in others. And this article, in matching some of Blake's literary images and his drawings -- he was a transcendent human being -- apparently a radiant one from people who knew him. But this guy may have had this factor in his blood all his life. He was on, all the time. He was full of the magic mushroom. I mean it was a biochemical thing, and it came out in his extraordinary writings and drawings. Isn't that fascinating?

THRUST: For me, he's one of the optimum human beings.

STURGEON: Of yes, yeah, he was -- as I say, from the people who knew him, he was a radiant human being, he shed it all around him.

THRUST: Parts two and three of *More Than Human* use the technique of anamnesis (that is, recalling the past to mind and relating past joys and sorrows) followed by analysis and insight by the characters doing the recollecting. Do you see any connections at all between your uses of this technique and Wordsworth's *Prelude* where he writes about the growth of a poet's mind? Or any connections with the writings of Joyce or Proust?

STURGEON: No, not specifically. I got this out of -- purely out of analytic techniques, the one called abreaction -- which is the question, "Well what were you doing an hour ago? what were you doing yesterday? what were you doing the day before yesterday?" -- force the mind to recall that way. And sometimes when you can't get a person to start early in his life and go up with it, you start now and go backwards and get it in even greater detail.

THRUST: So abreaction for you is not the "jiggery-pokery" of science that H.G. Wells was talking about --

*I'm not familiar with the article mentioned and am not sure exactly what was being referred to, but psilocybin (or psilocin, which is the metabolic product which actually has the psychotomimetic properties) is an indole derivative, closely related to tryptophan (an amino acid) and tryptamine and serotonin (both very important brain chemicals), all of which can be found in the blood in various forms.]

STURGEON: No.

THRUST: -- but real science realistically applied?

STURGEON: Well, I don't know if you should call any mental thing like that a science. It's hard to say. In my own definition of science as knowledge, yes. It is a technique, and it's a technique that can work and work really dramatically. I've seen it happen.

THRUST: On page 166 of the Ballantine *More Than Human*, Janie casually tells Hip that matter, energy, space, time, and psyche are "all the same thing." Aside from the scientific "jiggery-pokery" for purposes of plausibility, do you have any serious belief in the identity of the mind and the universe?

STURGEON: Yes, I have. Sometimes, I think the universe is a mind.

THRUST: Wordsworth thought so too.

STURGEON: Wordsworth thought so?

THRUST: He has a vision of -- a tremendous vision on Mount Snowden at the end of the *Prelude* of a kind of cosmic mind.

STURGEON: I never knew that. See, you get learning experiences everywhere you go.

THRUST: Have you ever done any reading about classical or medieval alchemy?

STURGEON: No, not specifically. Although, God knows, I've read ever so many books and novels -- and of course what's in my beloved eleventh edition. I have the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedias Britannica*. I was brought up on it. And the articles in there are tremendously full. But its got twenty-eight volumes plus supplements -- so has the 1972 edition. The 1972 edition has World War I, World War II, and the largest explosion of technology the world has ever known. And so, what was it they took out? It's all in the eleventh. Beautiful, articles -- long, exhaustive articles on art, and architecture, and philosophy, and religion, and biography. And it's just simply junked in the later editions -- no big half-page color photographs or anything like that -- but things of early aircraft, balloons, and so on.

THRUST: So someone studying your writings, if they looked in the eleventh edition, they might run across things that you used?

STURGEON: Over and over. No question about it. And I used to read it randomly. I'd grab any column and open it anywhere, which is a wonderful habit to acquire.

THRUST: At the end of *More Than Human*, Gerry sees the -- do you pronounce that Gerry or Jerry?

STURGEON: Jerry.

THRUST: -- sees the *Homo Gestalt* as a kind of humanized god, which is something of a paradox. Do you personally see SF as generally Promethean in spirit? or -- iconoclastic? or --

STURGEON: Ray Bradbury once said the proper worship of man is man. I can't answer better than that.

THRUST: Do you count yourself as a humanist rather than an orthodox --

"Mention incest, and bang--instantly, idiot children"

STURGEON: My son's name is Andros Theodore which means "man is the gift of God."

THRUST: Did you choose the name Theodore, or was it chosen for you?

STURGEON: No, it was chosen for me. My mother and father were divorced. My father's name was Edward. I was Ted. Now if I was Edward, I could be Ted, but I could also be Ned or Eddie which was her husband's name. But if I was Theodore, I would always be Ted but never Ned or Eddie -- and it was that simple. Sturgeon came from my stepfather. I was born a Waldo, which is a very interesting image that goes back to the sixteenth century - Peter Waldo. The Church called him a heretic, he called the Church corrupt. So --

THRUST: In this vein, do you see anything iconoclastic, or anti-Christian, or romantic about your thinking or writing?

STURGEON: I consider myself a profoundly religious man. I do not like organized religion. I think organized religion interferes with worship. Otherwise it couldn't make a buck. That's how it makes a buck, by interfering with worship. I have an interesting snapshot in my mind of the moment at a service in a temple or in the church when they collect the donations. The priest will stand facing the congregation, and the congregation brings its substance to the priest - call the substance worship if you like. Right? The ushers bring it up, and he stacks it up. He then turns his back on the congregation, and he holds it out to the altar in the front of the church, or whatever. And that moment, to me, epitomizes the very nature of the Church where the substance of the people is not valid unless it goes through him and he turns his back to them. I have always wanted to have the chutzpah to get up at that moment and stamp up past him slap a hundred dollar bill down on the altar -- put him in a hell of a predicament, because he wants my hundred dollars; on the other hand, I didn't do it the right way.

THRUST: The last time you re-read *More Than Human*, if you did, how did the older Sturgeon respond to the younger Sturgeon's novel?

STURGEON: Gosh, I don't know if there's any particular response. There are times when I'm a little amazed that I was able to come up with as much as I did. Not so much with *More Than Human*, because I've had my nose in it quite deeply for one reason or another over the years. But I read a book of mine quite recently called *The Cosmic Rape*, and I was absolutely amazed that I was able to pack so much into one book. There are so many story lines, so many characters, so many changes of pace, and such an overall wild concept. And the last sequence of that, where he goes off into these other worlds and all these other forms, is such a rich race of prose. I really was astonished by it; I have to admit that -- as a totally objective thing, as if I'd never seen it before - I hadn't read it in years.

THRUST: On page 38, Lone sees himself as --

Wrong. Wrong as a squirrel with feathers, or a wolf with wooden teeth; not injustice, not unfairness -- just a wrongness that, under the sky, could not exist ... the idea that such as he could belong to anything.

You were using a figure of thought called *adynatony* [pronounced a-doo-nah-tony] -- that is, an impossibility or an impossible reversal of nature --

STURGEON: What do you call that again?

THRUST: Adynaton -- a classical name for it -- the impossible.

STURGEON: That's from the Greek?

THRUST: Right. It also means the impossible to do or say, the impossible to express.

STURGEON: Yes, I suffer from that, badly.

THRUST: In some way or other, all good and effective science fiction stories make use of this figure and concept in working out the stories. It is the figure of thought for science fiction, making the impossible seem possible or probable. Do you have any opinions or thoughts concerning this element in the science fiction style or story -- this particular type of figure?

STURGEON: I think it lies, again, in that symbol that is my trademark -- the letter Q with the arrow through it ~~GP~~ -- asking the next question, and also in my respect for data. Because out of data you will always get the truth if you get enough data and if you conceal or distort none of it. And the inexpressible can ultimately be expressed by following that course. I think this is one of the functions of science fiction.

THRUST: A friend of mine says everytime he sees "Baby Is Three" he thinks of the phrase "baby makes three" from the song about my blue heaven --

STURGEON: Yes, so many people refer to it that way; it's irritating.

THRUST: Did you have any connection in your mind --

STURGEON: None at all, none at all. No, it's one of those titles -- usually, when I start writing, I don't have a title. There are a few exceptions, but usually I don't have a title. The title comes somewhere out of the copy and the perfect title suddenly emerges from the middle of page thirteen, or something like that. One of the exceptions is a story I wrote with such a magnificent title, I didn't even need a story. Harlan Ellison bought it, and Paul Krassner tried to buy it from Harlan sight unseen for a whole issue of *The Realist*. *Playboy* magazine tried to buy it, again on the strength of the title. And I should live long enough to get another title like that one -- a beauty. "If All Men Were Brothers, Would You Let One Marry Your Sister?" I mean, titles like that just don't come along like grapes in bunches. They really don't.

THRUST: I consider "If All Men Were Brothers" one of your strongest pieces. How long was the actual conscious thought behind that in gestation?

STURGEON: About twenty-five years, or more. No, I tell you, I wrote the first stories in science fiction that dealt openly with homosexuality. "If All Men Were Brothers" deals with incest. But those stories were not really about homosexuality, and this story is not really about incest. What they are really about is the unwillingness of human beings to confront. I mean, to get an idea and think it through -- to ask the next question. I mean, I went into that quite deeply in the story. You cannot talk about incest without somebody instantly bringing up the matter of idiot children. I mean, it's pushbutton. People stand around all night telling dirty stories about copulation, and nobody's going to mention children once. Mention incest, and bang -- instantly, idiot children. It's a profoundly unfair thing to people who have idiot children, who have no such consanguinity. It's a very profoundly

unfair thing to them, because they don't happen to have that particular social ill. But -- and it is only a social ill, not a biological one.

THRUST: You said More Than Human is going to made into a movie?

STURGEON: That's right, yeah.

THRUST: Who's going to make that?

STURGEON: Bertrand Tavernier has done -- if you're a movie buff -- The Judge and the Assassin, The Clockmaker of Saint Paul, Let Joy Reign Supreme; and he's just finished a screen play of a perfectly extraordinary science fiction novel by D.G. Compton called The Continuous Katherine Mortonhoe. It's published here by DAW, who should be so lucky as to get such a good book. The Unsleeping Eye. The screen play will be called Deathwatch, the picture will be called Deathwatch.

THRUST: Is the script written?

STURGEON: No. This is why I went to France. We did some preliminary work on it, but the money people hadn't got together yet. And we delayed, until finally we had to come back here. This is what we came back for.

THRUST: You will help with the script, right?

STURGEON: Oh yes, indeed.

THRUST: Oh don't let them ruin it.

STURGEON: I will never, never let them. Twice before I've sold it to the movies. Once, the screen play was written by somebody else, and it was a real dog. The second time the screen play was co-authored by me and Orson Welles; and if I ever have an opportunity to work with Orson Welles again, I won't. This man is bad news.

THRUST: Do you as a writer -- images are very important to a writer -- do you as a writer know very much technically about images, or do they just rise out of your imagination?

STURGEON: Well they rose out of my imagination first, and then I got to know a lot about them.

THRUST: It is a natural thing with you to think in images?

STURGEON: And I teach writing. So, therefore, I know how to teach people to evoke these images and so -- I know how to teach people to change the texture of what they write so that the first half of the page might seem to be printed on silk and the next half on burlap -- where nobody can look at it and find out how the hell he did it, but I can teach him how the hell he did it -- which is nice.

THRUST: Who is publishing Godbody, and when will it be published?

STURGEON: I haven't got a publisher, and I don't want one. The moment you get a publisher, you get a contract; and the moment you get a contract, you get a deadline. For Godbody, no deadline. It's gonna grow in its own time -- a couple of years more, perhaps. Then I get a big pack of papers under my arm, and I walk in to an editor; and I say, "Editor, here is this book." No, I've got a crackerjack agent now. He'll put it to auction. And the publisher will come to it; it won't go to the publisher.

THRUST: Thank you Mr. Sturgeon.



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N

ot long after the release of *Close Encounters*, an editor at *Circus* magazine (a magazine devoted to pop-rock, and not the Big Top, despite the implications of its name) called me up and asked me, "As a science fiction writer, what do you think of the soundtrack scores of these films -- *Close Encounters* and *Star Wars*?"

What should I, as a science fiction writer, think about those musical scores? Both were by the same man, John Williams -- who also scored *Jaws*. Had the music much -- if anything -- to do with the films' box-office popularity? Had it much -- if anything -- to do with science fiction? What in hell is "science fiction music" anyway?

Back in the fifties several sf authors with musical interests or pretensions tried to forecast possible musical futures. None of them came as close to the present-day music scene as Aldous Huxley did in his thirties book, *Brave New World*. None foresaw the withering of the conservatory tradition in contemporary serious music; those who foresaw technical revolutions did so in the wrong directions, missing the boat on the basic electrical revolution -- in which any instrument's signals, once converted into voltage, can be used as an input to a synthesizer of any degree of sophistication, or otherwise changed by "black boxes" used for specific effects.

The course of art is rarely directly historical: movements in the arts are usually seen as such from a historical perspective but in fact the history of art has always been the history of individuals. Each major original artist has had a profound effect upon the subsequent course of his area or field of art. For that reason it is impossible to predict the future course of the arts. The future of the arts will be determined by those of talent and skill who apply themselves to their arts.

On the other hand, some technological forecasting is possible. That is to say, we can guess with a modest chance of success at the technological evolution in music yet to come. It's easy to see that digital-encoding will revolutionize the recording field as much as the introduction of tape once did. It's equally obvious that computers are going to play a larger part in the recording process -- they are already used in mixdowns -- as the number of choices for the recording engineer at any given moment becomes overwhelming.

Although it is possible to "program" a computer to compose music, this is a stunt and a curiosity next to the more likely applications of computers to aid and assist in the recording process. Computers have been developed which can synthesize the sound of any instrument, but the will to make music is a very human one and one unlikely to be surrendered to machines. Computers may make it possible for people with no ordinary performance skills to create effective music -- opening the arena of music up to a wider variety of performers.

Already the composer has the technological opportunity to record the definitive version of his own work, using modern keyboards and multiple recording techniques -- invented by rock musicians.

Digital encoding was developed because it allows a higher amount of information to be stored on tape and does not suffer from background noise the way analog recording does. This has been largely in response to the video revolution and the perceived need for video-playback disks in addition to video tape recorders. There is a continuing blend between the technologies of audio and video: TV is readying itself for stereo sound -- something presently feasible since TV sound is broadcast in FM and requires only multiplexing in the way FM stereo is done. Home video-cassettes offer further opportunities for cross-blends: concerts, opera, musical theater, for example. It's only surprising that a major rock musician hasn't created the first video production yet -- but I head Todd Rundgren is working on it . . .

Yes, but what will the music of tomorrow sound like?

The "bar scene" in *Star Wars* offered a motley group of humanoids playing odd-looking instruments, but what we heard was slightly souped-up Chicago-style jazz. Cute, but trivial.

The human ear can hear sounds between roughly 30 hz and 15 kHz -- vibrations occurring between 30 cycles per

second and 15,000 c.p.s. -- with most musical information occurring in the range of 50 hz to 5 kHz. (This is because when we double a rate of vibration we produce a tone one octave higher. Middle A is pitched at 440 hz; A one octave higher is 880 hz, the next A after that is 1,760 hz, and the A after that is 3,520 hz -- the highest A on a piano keyboard is 7,040 hz. The lowest note on most pianos is also A -- pitched at 65 hz.) Western music has evolved a twelve-tone "tempered" scale -- a scale of twelve notes within a single octave which, according to which notes are used in a given scale can approximate all the major keys although not perfectly. (A perfect scale with the correct mathematical relationships between each whole tone would require an instrument so tuned that no other key but the one to which it was tuned could be used. This was in fact the case with keyboard instruments predating the piano. The "tempered" scale involves a few compromises.) Within this overall context, Western music has incorporated a number of modes and minor scales -- one of which, for example, is the blues scale, in which a minor scale is imposed over major-scale accompaniment. Early in this century serious composers experimented with polyphony -- multiple keys in simultaneous use -- and so-called "serial" or 12-tone music in which each note has the same weight and no specific key or tonal center is implied. Each direction has been explored to the edge (and beyond) of sterility. It appears that dissonance means nothing without the contrast with consonance -- that contrast is what arms any mode with effectiveness.

With this in mind, we can observe the following:

Melody will probably never disappear from music, although some aspects of music may (as has already occurred) stray quite a distance from melody. Yet melody will remain if only for needed contrast.

Music will not leave its present spectral bounds -- it will go neither sub- nor ultra-sonic, since this would be unperceivable for most people.

Sound textures -- the sonic palate once offered solely by acoustic instruments and massed orchestras -- will be generated by new sources, as the technology develops, probably in order to fill in the gaps -- as synthesizers do now -- and create new and different "effects".

Fads in popular taste will be as unpredictable as ever, but as much in evidence.

T

hat's a science-fiction look at music. Now for a musical look at science fiction.

One of my pet peeves with The Media is the way science fiction is perceived. It seems to me that when one talks to a movie-maker, a tv producer, or even entirely too many people in music, the subject of science fiction always turns quickly -- if not immediately -- to a discussion of special effects.

I suppose this was in some ways inevitable. When we read of we conjure up vast images in our minds. Ships travel vast intergalactic distances via FTL. Probes go down into Jupiter. Anything possible -- even remotely possible -- can occur and we can visualize it. When Hollywood discovered sf in the early fifties it was George Pal -- a special effects animator -- who produced almost every major sf film, and the effects were often the most discussed aspects of those films. (Who cared about the low-budget actors speaking wooden lines? Remember the rocket takeoff in *When Worlds Collide*?)

But from a preoccupation with putting the visual wonders we'd previously seen only in our imaginations onto the Big Screen, Hollywood developed a new concept of sf: science fiction is visual gimmicks -- special effects. (Take away the special effects from *Star Wars* and you'd have virtually nothing left -- just a handful of low-budget actors speaking wooden lines and with nothing to do -- plus Alec Guinness, of course . . .)

About ten years ago science fiction collided with rock music. The way you could tell was by the song titles -- "Third Stone From the Sun," "Interstellar Overdrive," "Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun" -- and the "spacey" effects. (There were a few real sf songs like "Wooden Ships" which told sf stories -- or ripped them off

the unsuspecting authors -- but very few.) Indeed, a descender of that original collision is "space music," a term which originally described free-floating music of the sort produced by Tangerine Dream, and is now nearly meaningless, having been expropriated by everything from disco to fusion jazz.

Again, the problem was that science fiction was being conceived, by these musicians, as a set of special effects -- which, translated from visual to musical terms, meant effects which imparted a sense of other-worldliness: multiple echoes, phase-shifts, controlled stonality, etc. (The overlap between these effects and those generated to either duplicate or stimulate a psychedelic state was about 95% I have always regarded the drug-context as a more valid one for this music than the sf-context.)

This isn't all that recent. In the early fifties the Sauter-Finegan band -- the band which introduced full-spectrum music to records with the advent of high fidelity and was on the cutting edge of adventurous popular music in the early fifties -- released a single called "Science Fiction." It was full of bombast and effects, and was one of the weakest pieces Sauter-Finegan (another S-F) ever recorded.

The reason for this is a simple one: There is no true "science fiction music." There is nothing musical about science fiction, and there is nothing really science-fictional about the same things at all.

Music has been used within science fiction, and science fiction has been used within music. But sf is a verbal concept -- it deals with ideas - while music is non-verbal and communicates feelings or emotions. Thus, "Wooden Ships" doesn't sound like science fiction, musically -- the sf is in the lyrics alone and if you ignore them you'll miss the sense of science fiction entirely.

At this point I know that at least one person in the reading audience is already shouting, "But what about *Karl-Bloemah's Aniara*?"

Aniara has been celebrated since its first performance, and especially since its early-sixties release on record here, as "a genuine space opera," since it is in fact a modern opera set aboard a Universe-like spaceship in which generations live and die, original purposes forgotten. It is also musically one of the dullest pieces I've ever forced myself to listen to -- although it's a double-record set I've rarely known anyone to listen past side one -- since it was composed in the post-Wozack style of mid-20th-century quasi-serialism, a deadly musical context for an opera, I think. Add to this the palpable enue that oozes from the bleak existential philosophical context of the piece and you end up with the recorded equivalent of Stanislaw Lem: technically admirable perhaps and possibly thought-provoking but not very enjoyable. Yet *Aniara* does represent one of the few genuine marriages between sf and music. That, I think, is about all one can say for it: the marriage was cold and loveless and there were no offspring.

So, as a science fiction writer, what did I think of the soundtrack scores of *Close Encounters* and *Star Wars*?

I though they were professionally competent movie-scores which had no more to do with science fiction than the same composer's score for *Jaws* did. Williams did his usual eclectic mix of classical and popular themes, orchestrated in the quasi-classical grandiose Hollywood style of yore, and neatly cued to the visual action in the movie. Like most competent movie scores, Williams' scores rarely intruded themselves upon the consciousness of the audience. Instead they served to subtly buttress the effects and moods of the films, creating audience tension when that was desired audience exultation when that was appropriate, etc. Movie scores exist to manipulate the audience, to work subliminally upon the audience in order to create within the audience emotions appropriate to the movie. This Williams' scores did at least adequately and perhaps even more than adequately. That he shunned the aural equivalent of the visual effects in the two movies -- and didn't cheapen his scores with cute sound-effects -- is entirely to his credit. (I did think that *Star Wars* theme was a bit close to that of

Born Free, but in Hollywood that's a plus -- not a minus.)

In other words, Williams didn't write any "sci-fi music" for either *Close Encounters* or *Star Wars*.

I'd like to close this column with a basic observation about music.

Music has always been a popular art. People working together would sing to establish working rhythms. When people mated or died music was used to celebrate the event. Hard-working people have always blown off tensions in their after-hours music and dancing.

Yet music which begins to serve a particular purpose of function always evolves away from that function toward pure art: something to be valued for itself alone and not for its usefulness. In this century two genres of music have evolved from their popular roots to the levels of art: jazz and rock. It took jazz about fifty years to accomplish this. With the improvements on modern media technologies it took rock only ten years to evolve out of rock 'n' roll, and only another ten to become the genre for modern serious music in the final quarter of the 20th century throughout the western world.

Yet the process goes on. When rock evolved away from pop, popular music continued to live on, and continued to serve its usual functions. Today we await the "next" rock 'n' roll -- the next major movement in popular music. We are in reality awaiting the next Chuck Berry, the next Bill Haley, the next Little Richard, and the next Elvis Presley. They -- whoever they are -- will bring something new and necessary to popular music. And if we're lucky they in turn will be succeeded by the next Beatles -- the next person or group of persons to take this new thing and elevate it to its highest level within popular music. After that, if its keeps on growing it will become less popular and more demanding of its listeners, and someday it too will be art.

- Ted White

THE HUGOS: A PERSPECTIVE DOLG FRATZ

I may be crazy for writing this, since (1) it's the time you read this, the Hugo Awards will already have been announced, and (2) this very issue contains John Shirley's diatribe against these awards, but I'm the editor and I can do what I want. What follows is my opinion on who will have won the Hugo Awards this year in Phoenix, and who should have won them instead.

(Note: Get a copy of the nominations for this year for reference while you read. I'm not going to go to all the trouble of listing the nominees.)

In the novels, I don't think Marion Zimmer Bradley has large enough fan following to win, although they are very dedicated, thus the nomination. Martin's novel may be too well written to win, and I don't think fans have so much respect for money that they'd give it to Miven and Pournelle. That leaves two good to excellent novels by two fan favorites, Dickson and Fohl. Fohl has been hitting the fan circuit hard of late, and *Gateway* did win the Nebula (and in fact is the only novel nominated for both awards). I think Fohl will take home the Hugo, and a rather well deserved one.

For the novella award, both Benford and Laumer are nominated for chunks of novels which were prepublished a year early, and I don't think they'll get it for that reason. Vonda N. McIntyre wrote an excellent story, but I don't think she'll win. I expect John Varley to win. This is his year. He couldn't pull a Nebula, but if he doesn't win a Hugo this year it's a major tragedy.

(CONT on page 28)

FROM THE PICTURED URN



CHARLES SHEFFIELD

Part 1: THIN PARTITIONS.

It has probably happened to you, too. You are at a party, and it's not a science fiction party. The conversation around you has been politics, jogging, television, investments, and you are bored. Until, out of the blue, you come across a total stranger who reads science fiction. Not only that, he wants to talk about it. He isn't an expert, and freely admits that. But he likes it. You retire to a quiet corner, and the conversation develops.

Fascinating stranger: As I say, I read it when I get the chance. You know, buy it at airports, when I see it in local bookshops, that sort of thing. Some of it is good, and some of it's sheer tripe.

You: It certainly is. You can't tell by the titles or the covers, they don't seem to have anything to do with the book for most of them. You have to learn the authors.

Intelligent stranger: Yes, I realize that. It's hard on the new writers, I suppose, but I've learned to watch out for the old stand-bys.

You: So you do know a good deal about the stuff. Have you any special favorites?

Discerning stranger: More or less. I suppose there are five or six of them that I'll latch on to whenever I see a book. You know, there's Heinlein, and Clarke, and Isaac Asimov. And Hal Clement, and Paul Anderson.

You: (gently) Poul Anderson.

Stranger: Yes, that's the one. I never knew how you pronounced his name. Oh, and there's Larry Niven. I always look out for his books.

You: (nodding wisely) I see. You prefer hard science fiction.

Stranger: What science fiction? Did you say 'hard'?

You: That's right. You see, there are some writers who use strictly accurate science in making their stories. All

the ones that you mentioned are like that. Then there are others who don't bother with the science. They write about dragons, or muscular barbarians on alien worlds, rescuing beautiful women. Or they write about alien cultures, and the way that the people on the other worlds would behave.

Stranger: And they're not hard science fiction writers, then? So what are they?

You: Oh, I don't think there's a word for them. There's people like Ann McCaffrey, Ursula LeGuin, Zelazny, Cordwainer Smith. And there are some good ones who write mainly about people and the way they behave. Writers like Tiptree, or Theodore Sturgeon, or Harlan Ellison, or--

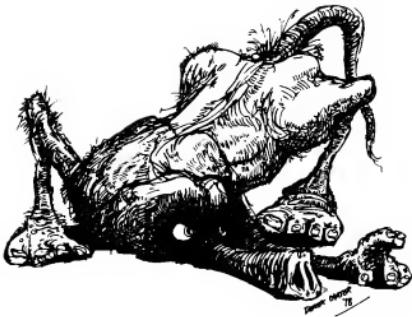
Stranger: But I love all the people you just mentioned. They're on my list of sure-fire buys, too.

You: (shrugging) All right. So you like things other than hard science fiction. So do I.

Stranger: (frowning) I still don't understand the point you were making. You say that the first writers I mentioned only use strictly accurate science in making up their stories. But I'm sure I've read Heinlein stories with time travel in them. And I've read Niven stories with faster-than-light drives, or Clarke stories with teleportation.

You: Yes, I'm sure you have. But the basic science in the stories is always correct. They don't have things that are impossible, inconsistent with the physical laws as we know them.

Persistent stranger: But the things I mentioned are inconsistent with known physical laws. There's not the slightest evidence that time travel is even logically possible -- it leads to horrible paradoxes if you try and assume it. And teleportation is just as bad, there's no theory that admits it as remotely probable. As for faster-than-light travel, that's contrary to the theory of



relativity, and as I understand is that theory it one of the absolute cornerstones of modern science. If you throw out relativity, then you might as well throw out mechanics and electromagnetic theory. You might as well go back to the phlogiston theory, or the Ptolemaic view of the solar system. Neither the Copernican viewpoint nor the kinetic theory of heat are any better established than special relativity.

You: (defensively) Look, Niven and Clarke and Asimov only bend the physical laws a little bit in their stories -- enough to let them develop their theme. Most of what they do fits in well with current science. That's why they're called hard science fiction writers. Whereas the others -- *Thoroughly obnoxious strangers*. Which is more consistent with known science. I mean, that breaks a well-established physical law, such as the theory of relativity, or one that just takes place on another planet. It seems to me that your 'muscular barbarian' story on another planet, breaks no physical laws at all. With the number of planets in the universe, it's almost certain that we would find worlds with other races on them, and they would be at all stages of development. There's no violation at all in postulating alien cultures, or creatures like dragons. It seems to me that your definition is quite meaningless. You dismiss the stories about things that are consistent with present science, such as alien worlds, and you admit as 'hard' science fiction stories with ideas that are completely orthogonal to current scientific concepts. If I were defining the term, I would say that your hard science fiction writers are all writing soft science, and some of your others are really writing hard science fiction, stories that fit every physical law that we know or conjecture. Let us, as exemplary cases, consider two stories: *The Mote in God's Eye*, and *Dragonflight*. In the case of the latter, despite the obvious parallels that we might draw with Spenserian image-building.

You: (softly) Oh Shit. Somebody come and rescue me. How did I get trapped into this one? Help! Somebody, join us and talk about the Dow-Jones average and the price of tax-exempt bonds. Should I have an accident and drop my drink on his trousers? I wonder what time it is? Maybe I could throw a fit.

Enough of the Socratic dialogue. The point remains: what is hard science fiction? In what measurable way are Clarke, Clement, Niven and Herbert different from Farmer, Moorcock, Leiber, and Sturgeon? Distinguish between, as '1066 And All That' might have put it, Fornelle and Pohl; which do you consider are the more alike, Silverberg or Malzberg, or vice versa? (Be brief.)

I will offer a definition, and you can tear it to pieces. The people who are usually described as 'hard' science-fiction writers are poorly named. They should be called fiction-science-writers. They are writing stories about science, and the logical consequences of that hypothetical science. Since present science builds on past science, it is logical that future science should build on present science, and be largely consistent with it. Of course, there will be some surprises. Phlogiston theory and the kinetic theory

of heat are fundamentally different, just as the philosophical underpinnings of general relativity are different from Newtonian views of space-time.

How does the fiction-science writer design a story? He decides which of the present known science will be changed for his fictional world, and he permits only those changes that lead to calculable consequences. His universe differs from the current scientific models in only a limited number of ways, and it does so as a direct consequence of the new scientific ideas that he has built into it.

Can we distinguish the fiction-science writer from the science-fiction writer? I think so, although the partition between the classes is very thin and it even moves around as you watch. Fiction-science writers are really disguised scientists. It isn't a question of formal training, it's a matter of outlook on the world. A fiction-science writer will know far more about the orbits, structure and composition of the worlds he describes than will ever appear in the story. He will spend days to make sure that a number that he quotes in a story is accurate. He will split infinitives cheerfully, but not hydrogen nuclei. If his stories have weaknesses, they will be in the people, not the background facts.

(I keep saying "he", and I think that I really mean "he". I have been trying to bring to mind good examples of female fiction-science writers, and having a hard time doing it. Suggestions?)

I leave it to the reader to make the list, and sort out the fiction-science from the other writers. As usual some people are on both lists -- an interest in science is not inconsistent with an interest in people and emotions.

One final point, and an important one. If the fiction-science writer is really a disguised scientist, why isn't he writing real science, which is at least as exciting as made-up science? Some, of course, do both. Arthur Clarke claims to have had only one real scientific idea in his life, but it was a seminal one that led to the whole apparatus of communications satellites; and Greg Benford writes scientific papers wearing one hat, and both fiction-science and science-fiction wearing his other hat. But they are rather the exceptions.

I think the answer, at least for the physical sciences, is a simple one. The basic language of the modern scientist is mathematics. Unless you are fluent in that language, it is difficult to read the literature, to write papers, and (harder yet) to get those papers published. Work written in the 'wrong' language will not sell prior to unless it is the work of an established scientist. It will not usually even be read -- no one has the time to plough through something set out in an unfamiliar notation when a perfectly good universal language -- mathematics -- already exists. I suspect it is the single fact of mathematical fluency that separates many fiction-science writers from scientific fact itself.

Part 2: HOT WATER

And now for something completely different, at least on the surface.

It isn't difficult to annoy sf magazine editors. Simultaneous submission of manuscripts to two or more of them will usually be enough. It's just as easy to irritate book editors, by missing deadlines, or by delivering contract material that seems to be based on a précis of the New York City telephone directory.

And of course, to annoy writers is easiest of all, because by and large they have egos so huge that almost anything may be construed as an insult to one or more of them. (One guaranteed way would be to reveal to a non-pro writer the secret handshake of Members of the Science Fiction Writers of America.)

For all that, it's much harder to annoy all three groups simultaneously. After all, writers and editors often are for, to serve as a buffer against financial unpleasantness. You might expect writers to applaud when one of their fellows takes a rise out of an editor, or vice versa, and suppose that the camps are fairly well divided. (They are not -- editors and writers, more often than not, are the same individuals.)

Anyway, I was surprised to find that I managed to annoy writers and editors in roughly equal proportions with

comments that I offered on a recent Disclose panel. Don't ask me what the official name of the panel was, but whatever its intent (I vaguely recall something anatomical) it turned out to be on the subject of writing.

One of the audience asked a question about the rewriting of material -- how much rewriting should an author do? The obvious answer paraphrases the old reply to the question. How much mathematical reading must one do before one can perform creative mathematical work? Answer? Depending on the person, no reading is necessary -- or sufficient. I didn't say that, but instead offered one of Heinlein's basic rules of writing: Don't rewrite except at editorial request. I added that the most important thing to do was to get your story down on paper, whatever it is -- and get it into the mail.

The most common reason that stories don't get published is not that they are rejected. As anyone who has participated in a writers' group knows, vast numbers of excellent stories are started and never finished, and many more are finished but not sent out. It's nice to think that they are never mailed because the writer is striving for that final polish -- Wordsworth's "we needs must love the highest when we see it." More realistically, they are not sent out because no one likes rejection slips. Whenever you send a story to an editor, you put your ego a little bit on the line. One sure way to safeguard that ego is to keep your efforts in your desk, Emily Dickinson style, and rewrite until the cows come home -- ignoring the accepted fact that an author is rarely a reliable judge of his or her own work.

Well, I said all that. Or I thought I did. But I must have said it very badly. The evening of the panel, amid the flood of beer and general collapse of civilization, I was verbally assaulted by several authors.

"You're ruining young writers," they said, "You're telling them to put down any old junk, and not bother about the quality of what they write. You should be urging beginners to write at the highest level they know how, instead of telling them to send illiterate garbage off to the magazine and book editors, to blacken their reputations forever."

Right. The editors were even more upset. "My God," said one. "You ought to see my slushpile now. Don't make it worse. It's ninety percent sawdust and camel-shit." I had a sudden vision of the mailman, shovelling in the next day's batch over the threshold.

"Can you imagine what it would be like if writers did what you recommend?" said another. "We'll be swamped with material. We'll disappear under a mass of first drafts and never be seen again."

(Of course. That's the real reason for the sudden disappearance of Roger Elwood from the sf scene. He's still trying to tunnel his way out of a mile-high mound of remaindered Laser books. Publishers, keep piling them on there as long as you can.)

Well, let me not be diverted again. I still think that I was givin' the right advice to would-be writers. (People don't change their minds that easily: "I am steadfast; you are stubborn; they are pig headed fools.") Getting the story down on paper and into the mail quickly without excessive rewriting is important. Look, suppose you write a story from beginning to end ten times, then send it out at last and it is bought. Now you have a real problem. Would it have sold on the ninth writing? How about the eighth, or seventh? Did the last three versions actually get worse? That can certainly happen. Edward Fitzgerald published at least four versions of his 'Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam', and in most people's opinion the first one he did was the best.

(Notice that I call them versions, not translations. Fitzgerald took such great liberties in moving from the Persian originals to the English version that his work is rightly regarded as a major creative act. One example should suffice. 'The Nightingale that in the branches sang' translates literally not as a Nightingale, but as 'the chicken of happiness'. Now, I promise that this is positively the last parenthetical injection of this article.)

Part 3: PER ARDUA AD NOVA

Now let's go back to Francis Bacon and his 'Essay on

Studies'. We need just one line from it: "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man."

Convention panels count as conference, with emphasis on snappy responses. They do not encourage precision of expression. Now, however, I'm working in Bacon's third medium and I must fine-tune the comments I made at Disclose. To do that fine tuning, I need the first part of this article. I now propose that my advice to would-be writers still applies in most cases, but it must be treated with great care by anyone who regards themselves as primarily 'hard science fiction' writers.

All right. Hard sf writers are really disguised scientists. Well, in scientific work there's simply no such thing as too much checking, too much revision. Any scientist worth his salt will check and re-check, and publish only when he has confirmed all his data, references and calculations. Following that as a model, a hard sf writer should do as much research and verification of his science as he can bear to. It's not too bad if his style is imperfect, because an editor will catch that, it's part of his job. But no editor can be expected to verify every scientific fact and every calculation that stands behind a story. Those are the writer's responsibility, and he'd better get things right.

If not, he'll lose credibility with the readership he most wants. Readers will go to incredible lengths to check the validity of statements made in science fiction stories. For example, according to Larry Niven's 'Ringworld' and 'Neutron Star' have stimulated readers to produce long dynamical calculations, computer programs and literally books of analysis. Not only that, most of them seem to have written to him about it.

So let me modify what I said on that panel. If you want to write fiction-science stories, and if you are going to do any extensive review of your writing before you send it out, then you should put ninety-five percent of your review effort onto the science-content of your story. The more the better, there can't be too much of it. For the rest, get the words down on paper and let the editors worry about your literary style. If your ideas are good enough, any editor will be delighted to work with you on the means of expression.

How do I know? Quod feci, to quote Arne Saknussemm from 'A Journey to the Center of the Earth' -- and that's really the best proof anyone can offer.

-- Charles Sheeffied

P.S. What are the 'hard' sciences? Isn't LeGuin's anthropology as hard as Clarke's celestial mechanics? Where do stories that deal in political science, social science and econometrics fit in the discussion? Good questions, but I defer their consideration until future issues.



an interview with JOE HALDEMAN by clifford mcmurray

THRUST: Mr. Haldeman, are you afraid you may be the Jimmy Carter of science fiction -- peaking too early in your career with a blockbuster and then not being able to match it later?

HALDEMAN: No, I don't think so. People ask me that all the time. (laughs) What am I supposed to say -- "Yes, I'm afraid I'll be a failure before I'm a success?"

THRUST: Do you think the critics have reacted about the way you would to The Forever War, if someone else had written it?

HALDEMAN: Oh, I think that, like any first novel, it's gotten a disproportionate amount of praise. But I don't really pay much attention to critics. I enjoy seeing a review that has some quote they can pull out and put on the book jacket, but that's about it.

THRUST: Then you don't think you can be spoilt by all the praise you received for your first novel?

HALDEMAN: I don't think so. To be a writer and keep your head straight you can't listen to praise -- just like you can't believe criticism either. If you take to heart what everybody says is wrong with your writing, you'd never be able to write a word. And if you thought you were as good as some people say you are, you'd never be able to write either. By the way -- The Forever War wasn't really my first novel; it was my fourth. The others weren't sf, though.

THRUST: Since you feel that your opinion of your work is more important than other people's, how do you assess yourself as a writer? What are your strengths and weaknesses?

HALDEMAN: I don't really formally criticize myself. I guess if I have strengths, they're in the direction of dialogue and character. I suspect I'm more inventive than most writers, but what difference does my opinion make? I just do it, I don't analyze it.

THRUST: Are you perpetually dissatisfied with your work, as I've heard some other authors say that they are? Do you always believe that the stories you've written weren't what they should have been?

HALDEMAN: I think after you've finished a book there's

always a period -- a couple of weeks or a couple of months -- when you really dislike it. You'd like to run it through the typewriter again. But that is inevitable. I think that almost every writer I've talked to about that has the same feeling. But after a while, you know, it settles down. I know that some of my books are better than others -- they'd better be, since some took months to write and some took years -- but I think that they're all fairly well made, all carefully done.

THRUST: Let's talk about The Forever War for a moment. How did it evolve in your mind as you wrote it.

HALDEMAN: Well, I just sat down with the first line: "Tonight we're going to show you eight silent ways to kill a man." I was staying with Keith Laumer in Florida at the time. My typewriter was on the dining table and I put a piece of paper in it and wrote the first line. By the time I'd written a few pages it looked like it was going to be a novel. I didn't know it was going to be a novel when I started.

THRUST: So the novel was not from the beginning, as some have suggested, a reaction against Starship Troopers?

HALDEMAN: No, at no level was it...well, at an unconscious level I suppose it was. It was after I'd written 70 or 80 pages that somebody pointed out to me that it was a satire or an answer to Starship Troopers, but that really wasn't on my mind. If I was doing anything, I was translating my Viet Nam novel into sf terms.

THRUST: I've heard you say that you don't rewrite, that you basically write one draft and send it away. Has it always been that way?

HALDEMAN: It always has, and I think it's a terrible habit. It is a habit.

THRUST: If an editor sends a story back and asks you for a rewrite, are you willing to do that?

HALDEMAN: Oh sure. You don't make a living by antagonizing editors. (laughs) Normally they'll want you to change the beginning or the ending of a given scene, or something like that. Ben Bova makes me

change the ending of almost every story I send him. (laughs) I'm a professional writer; I can do that. But I never get something back saying "This is too sloppy, rewrite it."

Essentially I rewrite orally: I keep mumbling the sentence over and over, and when it sounds right I type it -- which is an awfully clumsy and slow way to write. I'd love to be one of these guys who can dash out 20 pages, then sit down and get five pages of good material out of that. I think that'd be a less nervous-making way of writing. But I don't know, I just started that way with poetry. I wrote poetry on the typewriter, which is a mistake anyhow -- and I just got into the habit. Now, once I see it in print, that's it.

THRUST: You had a novelette published in AMAZING a while back which you called a blind alley in the writing of The Forever War. Were there many such blind alleys?

HALDEMAN: That was the only big blind alley in the book. If I had it to do over I may have incorporated that into the book and expanded it. But it seems to have worked the way it is, so maybe I shouldn't monkey with it.

THRUST: What led you to consider it a blind alley in the first place?

HALDEMAN: Ben Bova wrote me a long letter explaining why it didn't really fit into the novel. He seemed right at the time, and I think he had a good point -- that is, that the situation on Earth took over the story. It was supposed to be the story of a soldier and instead it became the story of a degenerate Earth. So, if I were to incorporate it into the novel, the novel would have had to have been much longer.

THRUST: Let's talk about your own philosophy as expressed in The Forever War. Do you think that war is avoidable, or is it -- given human nature -- something that we'll have with us forever?

HALDEMAN: I think that's really an unanswerable question. I did an anthology that'll be out this year called Study War No More. It's a collection of science fiction alternatives to war. A lot of the stories deal with that question, none of them satisfactorily. I'd like to think that once people's immediate physical needs are taken care of there won't be any need for war. But I don't know whether that's true, and there's no way to prove it until you do take care of everybody's needs.

THRUST: You were rather surprised when you won the Hugo --

HALDEMAN: Yeah.

THRUST: Everybody had been saying for months in advance that you were a shoo-in. Why didn't you feel that way?

HALDEMAN: I don't know, I just don't want to build my hopes up and have them crash. I was surprised at the Nebula, and everybody knew I'd won the Nebula --literally. Everybody in New York had been told that I'd won the Nebula, and nobody told me. (laughs) My agent knew it months before I did.

THRUST: Which award were you more honored to receive, the Hugo or the Nebula?

HALDEMAN: Oh, the Hugo. The Nebula is tainted with politics; some Nebulas are given for the wrong reasons. It's a prettier and more expensive award, and in some circles it's probably a more prestigious award, but all you have to do is take a list of the books and stories that've won the Nebula and put it up against the list of those that have won Hugos. The Hugos

"the nebula is tainted with politics"

turn out to be the ones that endure, usually.

THRUST: Before you wrote The Forever War you had one set of reasons for writing. Now that The Forever War has made you a whole bunch of money, do the old reasons still apply, or do you have new reasons for writing?

HALDEMAN: Well, in the first place, The Forever War hasn't made me very much money. In the second place, my writing is sort of divorced from my money. You know, the money for a book comes in over a period of years, from the time you sign the contract until the last copy is remaindered. And so I just go ahead and write and the money comes in from my agent. It says on the check what book it's in payment for, but there's no cause-and-effect relationship, no kind of reinforcement. No, The Forever War has made me quite a bit less than Mindbridge. Sad, but true. Over the years it will make money, but it hasn't yet.

THRUST: Well, as I understand it -- perhaps there are some misconceptions floating around in this regard -- St. Martin's is paying a lot better advances than most publishers have in the past.

HALDEMAN: That's not true. They don't even pay me very much -- and I'm their star. (laughs)

THRUST: How did that misconception get started?

HALDEMAN: Beats me. None of the hardback houses pay really high advances. They don't have to. Your real money comes later, in royalties and subsidiary rights and such, and so the advance is more or less immaterial. That's what they tell you. But I'd rather have the money now, myself. (laughs)

THRUST: Mindbridge has a rather unusually style --

HALDEMAN: For science fiction.

THRUST: -- and I wonder what made you choose that particular style.

HALDEMAN: Well, in fact, the book was written for this reason. I'm an admirer of John DosPassos. I don't know if you're familiar with his USA trilogy; it's a seminal work of American literature. But it's broken into little sections. The entire trilogy must be over half-a-million words long, but the individual sections are as short as a page. I had problems with the trilogy because he'd go along for some 20,000 words on one story, then stop and do some tapdancing, and then pick up somebody else's story for another 20,000 words. Then we get these little biographies and newsreels and things, and then somebody else's story, and so on. By the time I get back to story A I've almost forgotten what it was about. I wanted to preserve the interesting part of that technique, but compress it and boil it down so that you don't have that problem of getting lost. So I took the DosPassos technique and applied it to only one story --that is, only one main character -- and compressed it violently, so that no section in Mindbridge is more than 4,000 words long. And it seems to have worked; the book sold for quite a bit of money as a paperback, and it sold as a mainstream

“i read maybe ten sf books a year”

novel, not as science fiction.

THRUST: What about the marketing of The Forever War? That wasn't particularly marketed as sf, was it?

HALDEMAN: What marketing? (laughs) Well, I don't think it made any difference. I think The Forever War got one-tenth of a page in Publisher's Weekly, and that and the science fiction magazines is the extent of the advertising... I don't know whether advertising sells books, anyhow. I never buy a book because of an ad. The Forever War had strong word-of-mouth sales -- and having been in ANALOG first as stories certainly helped.

THRUST: When you started writing, literally speaking, who were your heroes? Who were the people that you really looked up to, inside and outside the field?

HALDEMAN: Heinlein, of course, I like Hemingway, Hawthorne... (laughs) all these 'H's. I won't succumb to the temptation to reel off a long list; it keeps changing. Sometimes I go on kicks for a certain author. And, of, I dunno... as a matter of fact, Harry Harrison. Not so much as stylistic model, but to me he's sort of the quintessence of a good sf writer. He's very underrated, I think.

THRUST: Would you please elaborate on that?

HALDEMAN: Well, I just feel that he can do anything. Say, write a parody of a Victorian novel and sell it to ANALOG...

THRUST: And you come up with Tunnel Through the Deep. I see.

HALDEMAN: That's right. And at his very best (Make Room! Make Room!) he is one of the best of writers. Not only is he one of the best science fiction writers, but he's a consummate professional. That's what I mean by Victorian novel example. You can ask him to do anything and he'll just sit down at the typewriter and do it. I wish I had that talent.

THRUST: Did you ever set out consciously to imitate anyone's style?

HALDEMAN: No, but I've written partisches on a lark. Anyone from Mickey Spillane to Shakespeare, but just for the hell of it, not for publication.

THRUST: Once you became a writer yourself and had sole for a while, did you find your conceptions of who the best writers were changing at all?

HALDEMAN: Not radically. My conceptions change, but it's my experience as a reader rather than as a writer that makes them change, like anybody else. Writers do read fiction differently than people who read it simply for entertainment, though, because as a writer you're on the lookout for tricks you can use and you have to read a bit more closely.

THRUST: How much science fiction do you read now?

HALDEMAN: I read maybe ten science fiction books a year. More, if I have a long vacation.

THRUST: What are your goals for yourself as a writer now and in the next few years?

HALDEMAN: My immediate goals are -- seriously -- to get the books written that I have committed myself for. Once I have them written I want to take a little time off and write some short stories and poetry, because I've been under a considerable amount of pressure (I've got to finish another two books by this February). I don't feel that I can do my best work under pressure and I don't feel that I can properly experiment the way I want to within the framework of a novel. There are experiments that I want to do with viewpoint and characterization that I can't do in a novel and feel safe about it; it's too much of a commitment. So I want to do individual experiments in short stories to see if they work. If they work I'll use 'em in novels.

THRUST: Let's talk a little about the projects that you have in the works, or are thinking of doing.

HALDEMAN: Well, the ones that are in the works -- that is, the ones I've been paid for and have to do (laughs) -- are a non-fiction book about space colonization and space manufacturing, and a Star Trek novel (which is going to be interesting; they let me get away with murder). I've already done one Star Trek novel, and it was out sometime last September. Then I've got a novel planned out called Charlie's Will, and I've got the broad outline for a trilogy of novels that spans three generations, having to do with space colonization. I'll probably do that after I do Charlie's Will, but it depends on how I feel after I finish the Star Trek book. See, I'm in a fortunate position right now that I probably will never be in again: I'm ahead monetarily. I don't have to sell the outline and then write the book to get the other half of the cash. I just write the book first and then sell it. And if I can do that for a couple of books, then I'll never have to write on spec (as we say) again.

THRUST: Are you pleased with the Star Trek novel as something more than just competent hackwork?

HALDEMAN: Yes, I am. It's more of a novel of characterization than any of the Star Trek books before. I didn't have a script to novelize, so I was given more freedom to write and just made up the stories myself. I talked to Gene Roddenberry and he wanted an adult novel that contained the Star Trek characters. This was a challenge, to say the least. I think I managed to write that type of novel.

THRUST: Have you got some project tucked away in your mind that you don't feel ready to tackle yet?

HALDEMAN: Yeah, I definitely do. There's a long book that I want to write. I don't want to say too much about it, because if I do I'll never write it, but it's not science fiction. It's called 1968, and it'll be a long novel about the year 1968, which to me seems a very pivotal year in American history. The novel will try to explain why it was pivotal. I want to write it through the viewpoint of a paranoid schizophrenic, which is a challenge. It's been done before, but I want to try it in a certain context -- it should be interesting. I won't have the time for that for a couple of years, but I've mentioned it to some people and I already have publishers interested. I could get money for it now, but that's part of the reason why I want to experiment with short stories. Obviously, if you've got a paranoid schizophrenic for a viewpoint character you'll have a mechanically strange way of writing, because you have a totally untrustworthy viewpoint character. So I want to try that out in shorter works, first.

THRUST: Which book do you like best, The Forever War or Mindbridge?

HALDEMAN: Oh, I think Mindbridge much better. It's a more difficult book, it's more challenging to write. Pretty obviously the two main characters of the two books are pretty much the same fella, but I think he's better realized in Mindbridge. I expected the reviews to be much more negative for Mindbridge. There is this second novel syndrome. "Oh, he didn't live up to his early promise."

THRUST: That name makes others have told me, tends to put some distance between the reader and the characters in Mindbridge.

HALDEMAN: Well, I had a definite aim in mind when I did that... Maybe it was a mistake. I suspect when you sit down to write a book you shouldn't think about the technique or about the structure of the book; you should let it generate its own structure. But I was talking to Stephen Becker (a very good novelist who's been writing good novels for years), and he told me that in his opinion you couldn't write a good science fiction novel that was also a good novel by mainstream terms. He says that the science fiction writer has to spend so much of his creative energy and paper setting up the situation that there's too little room left for the normal concerns of the novelist. I was trying to approach that by saying "O.K., I can write a science fiction novel that's simply a normal literary novel written in the future, and by adopting the Dos Passos technique I can put in documents to fill in the mythical past reader who has gotten the thing out of his time machine." I tried it out in a short story first, and it seemed to work, so I went ahead and did it.

THRUST: Which story was this?

HALDEMAN: It's called "To Howard Hughes: A Modest Proposal." It was a "SF&F" around four years ago. It's funny. Mindbridge has been my most successful book in terms of money, and I had really expected it not to be. I had expected most people not to understand it or to have the patience for it. My editor -- this is interesting, in view of the later financial success of the book -- the editor I sent the outline to said "Well, I don't really think this can be done. We'll pay you, but not much; it's too much of a gamble." Well, we had a runaround about how much they ought to be willing to gamble, after The Forever War, and finally settled on a figure that he thought was too much and I thought was too little -- the usually state of affairs, I guess. When the manuscript went in, though, he did admit I'd succeeded.

THRUST: Could you tell us how the movie deal for The Forever War is coming along?

HALDEMAN: It's still in the tentative stages. It's been approved by a number of people, but a part of the group is French, and in France nobody is home in August. They all go the beach...

THRUST: Have you had any other film offers?

HALDEMAN: I've been offered verbally a mini-series for television, but not to the point of talking money.

THRUST: What were your impressions of the World SF Conference which you recently attended in Dublin, Ireland?

HALDEMAN: I have a lot of foreign editions out, and I enjoyed meeting the editors, publishers, translators and so forth. I won't be able to go every year.

THRUST: Do you think it will be the basis of a permanent world-wide coalition, and if so, will it be a useful one?

HALDEMAN: It may be, in some form, although Harry Harrison is tired of running it. Its main purpose will be in making information available -- what books are in print and available, etcetera.

"they count your arms and legs"

THRUST: It was rumored that you were offered the editorship of ANALOG, but turned it down.

HALDEMAN: Yeah, I'm not willing to move to New York. If they would have made the offer five years ago, I would probably have accepted.

THRUST: Was there any talk at all about the possibility of editing ANALOG outside New York?

HALDEMAN: Well, I talked this over with Ben (Bova), and I thought about maybe commuting to New York (from Florida) one week a month, but it just wouldn't work. The editor pretty much has to be there to watch over things, production and things... There's all the trades people you have to work with, not to mention the artists and writers dropping in...

THRUST: I've heard you mention that you've applied with NASA for a position as a mission scientist on the space shuttle...

HALDEMAN: Yes.

THRUST: I guess most people don't know what you did before you started writing full time.

HALDEMAN: I didn't do anything, I was just in school. I have a bachelor's degree in physics as well as a master's in English, and that's the minimum requirement. Implicitly, you have to be in good health and fairly young, although it doesn't say so on the application. You have to have a medical form filled out; they count your arms and legs. I don't hold out any great hopes. I believe I'm probably too old, but we'll see.

THRUST: Will this involve anything further in the near future in terms of medical examinations and so forth?

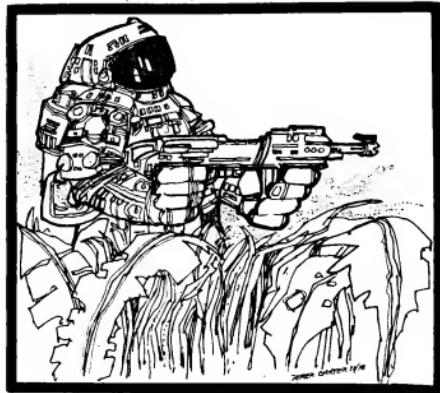
HALDEMAN: Well, if I'm accepted they'll obviously throw me in a hospital and go over every molecule in my body. And then they go through a two-year training program. I suspect they'll probably first accept four or five times as many applicants as will finally be in the program, and then skim the cream off that. I would assume that's when the medical phase of it would begin.

THRUST: It's interesting that you immediately became a full-time writer. How were you able to manage that?

HALDEMAN: I was only able to manage it because my wife was working. She was teaching High School. I suppose the first year I wrote full-time I didn't make a thousand dollars. Gay kept us going for, oh, easily four years before I was making more than half the family income. Now, of course, she doesn't have to work, but it was very important those years when she did. Now I can support her and she can be a woman of leisure for a few years.

THRUST: I'm sure we all wish you luck on your NASA application. Thank you for the interview.

[Note: Unfortunately, Joe Haldeman did not make the list of civilian specialists chosen as shuttle crewmen by NASA.]



ESSAYING

CROSS-POLLINATION & SF

Dave Bischoff

The worst thing a science fiction writer can do is to read science fiction.

Put quotes around that sentence, and you'll have an approximation of what I once heard Charles Sheffield say. That surprised me. After all, we all operate under the impression that in order to enter into the field of science fiction, one must first be familiar with what has been done, what is being done and what the editors/public want. A pragmatic assumption, certainly, since practically all of today's science fiction writers are long time readers of that literary mode. In fact, generally the reason they've become writers stems significantly from their love for SF. See last issue's column: it happened with me.

So I've presumed for some time now that the bulk of my knowledge of how to write science fiction has been stored away in my subconscious all those years I read the stuff--and that to keep a steady output coming through my typewriter, I would have to maintain a steady diet of current SF, to the exclusion of all the other forms of reading matter.

Not necessarily so... or so I've come to realize.

Indeed, as I've examined the influences I've had from various sources that reflect in my writing, giving it form, lending its uniqueness and necessary enthusiasm to get it past the various editors who have bought it, I've realized science fiction has merely provided the form and some of the motivation for my scripts.

When pressed to further explain his statement, Charles explained to me that he reads very little science fiction. His vast wealth of knowledge, his awareness of the latest in scientific thought, and his ability to research and calculate lend him the body to much of his work, once the inspiration has visited him. But the stuff of his fiction itself--characters, plot, language, theme, and the like--is influenced largely by his reading outside the field. Furthermore, he mentioned that he thought if he restricted his reading to SF, his writing would start to get very boring.

I've been mulling over this, and I would have to agree. My own influences bear this out to an astonishing degree--and so do, on close examination, those of the cutting-edge writers in this field. And I've come to the conclusion that, in order to stay fresh and exciting, science fiction has to stop being so preoccupied with its own identity and immediately visible roots.

I've never considered myself a terribly opinionated person. Generally, I'm capable of seeing all sorts of sides to a various issue--and that has stopped me from vehemently espousing one particularly slanted view. But I've discovered that in order to express myself, in order to have a viewpoint, a stand must be made. Evidently, I'm beginning to form firm opinions--and hopefully, retaining

the ability of understanding other viewpoints.

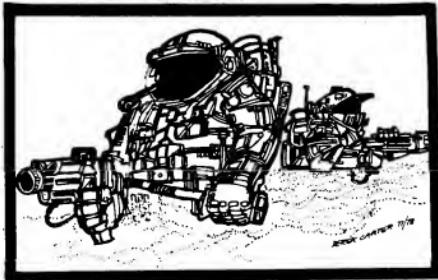
A while back, I was suddenly spouting all sorts of opinions I never knew I had to Dan Joy of the fanzine *FANNY HILL* for an interview he did with me. Due to space limitations, only a part of that interview was printed--but one of the opinions expressed was more or less similar to the subject of this essay. In the time that has past since that interview, I've considered my own influences and the essential nature and importance of that statement, and I've a few more thoughts on the subject. Not very controversial, but worth some discussion, I think.

What, then, influences your average writer, and what he writes?

To begin with, of course, himself. A writer brings to his work his worldview, his hurts and pains, his loves and joy, and his opinions on it all. The more successful a writer is in mixing his own blood into his typewriter's ink, the better an author he will be. Generally, though, this facility improves as the writer ages and matures, having all sorts of emotional, intellectual and spiritual experiences en route. As a rule of thumb, the older a writer gets, the better he gets--unless he refuses to grow, refuses to inject himself with fresh experience and fresh resources. This, I think, happened to Hemingway and is happening to writers like Philip Roth--so absorbed in themselves and the mythification of their experiences and viewpoint, that they smother themselves in their own staleness.

A writer brings to his writing his own experiences... and many of them are vicarious experiences, discovered and enjoyed in books and short stories. By being familiar with the tools and methods that other writers have used to express themselves, the writer can utilize the ones that appeal to him/her to express his/herself. Thus it is that, just as a child comes to imitate his parents in speech, posture and mannerisms, so a writer at first imitates his parents of prose until he finds his own voice stylistically and thematically. (Please note that 'he' here is meant to refer to both genders.) The grist for his mill comes from the subjects that excite him, that appeal to him for some reason or another. Thus it is that a writer will generally write adventure fiction if he likes adventure fiction, gothics if he likes gothics... and so on. At first, anyway. For a writer's work to grow, he must grow... not only maturity, but in understanding and appreciation of what other writers have written.

These days, there are a number of other kinds of vicarious experiences to be had which can influence writers. Movies, TV, Comic books. They all bear close affinities, after all, with writing. A person who understands the structure of a symphony is better able to handle the pacing of a novel. An appreciator of visual art is



well-equipped to describe a scene with the proper shading and depth. And a theater goer understands the workings of dialogue to an added degree. Potential sources are numberless. Comprehension of a foreign language is an example, lending distinct and curious lilt or emphasis to rhythms in prose or modes of thinking in the writer. The stimuli that affects the writer will affect what he writes.

Now, should I, for example, try to negotiate those high-ways, mountains and quagmires of my subconscious I'm sure I would end up quite lost in the mess of things that have influenced my writing. And all of them have not been science-fiction oriented.

What are my influences?

Well, I didn't begin to read SF proper until age 13 or 14. Up until that time, I sucked in all sorts of other media and literature. I read comic books insatiably. My disciplines in school (lousy as they were) affected the mold of my subconscious. But I've no real grasp of just how things I saw and read then affect my present writing; my memory just doesn't stretch back that far.

I know, however, that I am a passionate fan of television and film. I have a degree in those subjects, in fact--and was about to venture wholeheartedly in pursuit of a career in those fields before my writing began to sell. Let's take TV, for instance. But I've not been able to sit in front of a boob tube for hours--and often did. I am of the television generation, and my mind bears the mark. As does my writing.

Bonanza, and Gunsmoke and Maverick. The Man from Uncle, Thriller, The Twilight Zone. The marvelous array and variety was for me quite exciting and stimulating--until it all began to pall in repetition. But I had learned much by then, if only the visual and audio components of stories--formats, teasers, pacing and conclusions.

The television shows that began to excite me much more, in my college years, were the ones produced by English television companies such as the BBC, London Weekend, Thames, Yorkshire, et al. These shows bring considerably more talent and excellence into play than their American counterparts. Whole vistas of character interplay, tension, drama, style and view/show methodology were revealed. And I enjoyed the hell out of most of the shows I saw. I've been watching them eagerly whenever they appear, and if English characters and cadences often creep

into my work, this is the principle reason. I've been watching the British imports since 1970 when the *Forsyte Saga* was telecast here, and it has changed my life. The 26 episodes were a revelation and a revolution for me. It taught me more about plot and character, dialogue and pacing, and vicarious emotion than any science fiction I had read up to that point. Since then, I've viewed practically every English import, good and mediocre, and found them all rewarding in some manner or another. Presently, the summer *Masterpiece Theatre* is running the second selection of *Poldark* episodes--soap-operas historical adventure about a late 18th century land-owner in Cornwall, introduced unenthusiastically by Alistair Cooke. In truth, it's potboiler stuff. Based on novels by Winston Graham, the series dwells on stereotypical villains and heroes, less-than-deep relationships, and a general re-mining of familiar odds and ends.

But boy, is it good.

I mean, a recent episode (the beginning of one of the novels, *The Four Swans*) is a perfect study of how to engross a viewer (or reader) in plot and character. There are textbook examples of plot introduction, complication, and promise--all flowing smoothly thanks to almost seamless direction. The costumes and the scenery dazzle, the actors--for all the less than terrific dialogue they utter--absolutely sparkle with conviction and personality, not to mention charm. (The villain, George Warleggan--what a dastard--is played by Ralph Bates, a favorite of mine from his various roles in horror films. In a recent review of the series in *THE VILLAGE VOICE*, James Wolcott notes, "What Bates had going for him is an eerie, amusing resemblance to two of the great monomaniacs of our time--Harlan Ellison and Stanley Siegel. (He looks like a genetic cross between them, if you can imagine anything that horrifying.)" (I don't know about the monomaniac, but there is a resemblance to Harlan in the features...) The episode barrels along with deft and broad strokes clutching up the viewer, and leaving him at the end with terrific narrative snags. Anyone who watches this series can't help but learn much of what keeps viewers watching, or readers reading.

It is more than obvious that the English TV producers are influenced by more than one media. American TV owes its origins to the freshbroken but generally sterile ground of American film in the 20's, 30's, and 40's. (In the fifties, films had to change to compete with the upstart box--and generally they changed for the better.) It's generally filmed, with the end product a Frankenstein's monster of committee tastes catering to the assumed demands of Mr. Common Denominator American. Occasionally, fine work comes thru, and individuals triumph over the machinery of the process. When American TV is good, it is very good indeed. But the English have deeper and sturdier roots. In addition to the obvious film background, there is the surer and better backbone of English theatre. English TV has a vast wealth of finely-trained actors to draw upon, actors trained for the great number of theatres active in Britain. The shows are generally done with video-tape--and a finer system of video taping than America uses. Video tape gives the illusion of a live performance; giving the image more immediacy--and

more references to the theatre. Until recently exteriors were shot with film, and interiors done in studios...but lately, due to new video systems, exteriors can be done with video as well.

Also, English TV is much more literate than its American counterpart, not only in selection of material (Russia classics, French classic, history, everything; right now the BBC is in the process of producing all the Shakespeare plays in a coherent sequence), but also in form. Narrative devices have been adopted with astounding smoothness into the fabric of the productions-- everything from flashback to interior thoughts to point of view, imagery and visual metaphors. The comedy shows are done in a wealth of variety and experimental boldness. (I generally sit on the floor so I don't fall out of my chair laughing.)

I think you can detect my enthusiasm. And I hope I've made my point that English television has affected my writing positively in craft and subject. The best of these shows are done with verve, professionalism and craft that affect my emotions as strongly as some of the best books I have read. And the not-so-good ones? Well, they're better than Charlie's Angels.

As I mentioned last column, films of all sorts have influenced me greatly. And I prefer to watch them in movie theatres...they seem so much better there. I think I've seen more movies than I've read books. Films are the media's equivalent to average-sized novels. They have their own language of movement, symbol and pacing that often can be adapted to literary form. It was rare to find very short scenes in novels before popular films showed how effectively they could be used to streamline many screenplays, and often visualize my books as such, with extra things like description, sensory data and feeling (emotion) included explicitly and implicitly. And this way, the flow is kept up quite well, and I'm conscious of the script as a sequence of related scenes...which is a necessary device in novels, for transition, and impact. A few courses in film analysis and criticism in college were extremely beneficial, if only in structuring my own works.

Basically, though, when you talk about influences in writing it eventually all boils down to sorts of literature you've read. Other aspects of my life have influenced me (beside personal growth) such as music, (which has toned the emotions and mood of some of my stuff), art (what fantasy or science fiction writer is not influenced by the superb works of imagination rendered by the masters of yesteryear and the superb illustrators today?) and all the other interpretations of reality rendered by artists. But literature has probably influenced me most. How valuable were all those courses in English and American literature! The study of the King James Bible in Church and Sunday School every week taught me much more than just doctrines. Occasional forays into various sorts of poetry refreshed my viewpoint on the musicality and imagery than can be derived from words. (One story I wrote, "Alone and Palely Loitering"--to be published in Roy Torgeson's *Chrysalis III*, available from Zebrabooks by the end of the year--is a science fictional retelling of the poem of the same title by John Keats). Do I need to beef up a speech by one of my characters? Then I study Shakespeare's speeches for inspiration in form and language. Do I want to create an unusual character? Then I remember how Charles Dickens did it, and transpose his operating methods into modern usage. Do I want to have a frothy, winsome passage? Memories of P.G. Wodehouse are conjured up. How rich is our literary heritage. How startlingly relevant it is to today's literature, particularly science fiction. To paraphrase Newton's words, we can stand on the shoulders of giants if we choose to.

To try to illustrate some influences that I've had outside of science fiction, I'll list a few of them that I utilized directly or indirectly in writing *Nightworld*, to be published by Del Rey Books in February 1979 (Plug):

Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

The *Dark Shadows* TV Show

The New Testament; Catholicism and Protestantism

Monty Python TV series; Victorian history, costume and

manners

The *Avenger* (Steed and Peel, you know)

The works of Charles Dickens (particularly *David*

Copperfield and Great Expectations

The films of Ray Harryhausen

Henry IV Part 1 by Shakespeare

Being and Nothingness by Jean-Paul Sartre

Illustrations by Frank Frazetta

Medieval history and theology

All the Hammer Films

Greek, Roman and Medieval Christian mythology

I'm sure there's more--and a much longer list of SF influences...

But you get the point. And it's all basically an adventure novel...with thematic underpinnings.

Now, how about the breakthrough writers of SF?

Heinlein, for instance. Mr. Heinlein, as I understand it, started writing because health problems retired him from the military. The freshness in his writing comes from the fact that the man, besides being a born storyteller (which always helps), was obviously familiar with storytelling, present and past. He was obviously influenced by his contemporaries (O'Hara, Hemingway, Haggard, Farrell, and all the adventure writers). He brought an interesting angle on politics, and he had learned from the best of the pulp writers (Like Hammett, Chandler, and Brand) how to create an ingratiating, personable yet strong style, and how to create characters of at least some depth. Robert A. Heinlein brought American science fiction literature into the 20th Century. Astonished, many SF writers of lesser talent imitated him. And yet it is his work which lasts. What SF writers should have done was to investigate the riches of literature the man had heaved into the SF fishpond--and traced them outwardly into the wealth of literature.

C.S. Lewis was one of the few SF writers of that age (and he only wrote 3 books of the stuff) who actively integrated the classics with science fiction. Look how his works have lasted...and how influential they are.

A perfect example of the result of SF insularity and SF awareness in one person is Robert Silverberg. A pulp dynamo of rare stature, his initial SF work was perfectly good, wonderfully readable and generally enjoyable. And yet it was mostly bland--all the standard SF devices were there in various combinations and permutations...even some new SF ideas. And yet it wasn't until after a short retirement that Silverberg the writer emerged very quickly into his present estimable stature. The difference? Well, certainly you can say he matured, but the key factor to me is that the new! Silverberg was a man much more aware of show up in his books. *Dying Inside* is very influenced by Philip Roth for example--and yet it is uniquely Silverberg because of the freshness he has brought to an old science fiction idea by cross-pollination.

New patterns for the gene pool to enrich us all.

There are other, marvelous SF writers who come to mind. Who can read Keith Laumer, and not be aware of the vast array of outside influences he brought into the field? Or the work of Ted White and not see how he was influenced by the work of the best mystery writers of the century? And Roger Zelazny brought a whole carload of myth and wonder into the field bare-handed. Who can doubt the influence of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama in his work, quirky mixed with Raymond Chandler and a dozen other writers and blended with strong originality of his own?

There are, lots of other examples--think of your own. But the point I'm trying to make is that the best science fiction is always not merely innovative and original, but always brings outside influences into play. SF is always hungry for new concepts, new ideas to toy with and often forges onward to these future cartographies using creaky structures and cracked foundations they've found in outdated issues of ASTOUNDING to build their awe-filled wonders upon. There will always be the prophets in this literature to forge on; it is their home, and we should venerate and honor them for it is in their dreams that we shall build our homes, eventually. But the dreamers of yesteryear who built up the concepts which we use still in science fiction generally did poor structural work. Their ideas cry out to be filled with better plots, deeper characters, stronger themes. We have so much to work with--and so many outside influences to bring to bear upon our books to freshen and deepen that work.

The basic structures of Shakespeare's plays, scholars

tell us, lay about for years before he took them and made them the masterworks they are. Likewise, the basic structures of great masterworks lie about in the fields of science fiction. We have only to try to pick them up, dust them off, give them the good qualities that writers have been refining for years and use them.

Science fiction writers often complain of how hard it is to build new worlds, and how it interferes with the other fictional elements in their novels. But now we have a whole generation of readers who are familiar with these new worlds that SF has created--and want to see them used.

This is being done, and I think it's the wave of the future, as far as SF goes. I think that we'll find more and more science fiction in tune with a mass audience...and it will get better and better. An example is *Gateway* by Fredrick Pohl, a wonderful book about being human told in the unique way only a science fiction work can be told. There is nothing terribly astounding about the concepts in the book...no brave new worlds or scary new worlds. What Pohl has done is to take some old SF ideas mixed well with current scientific knowledge, and in that familiar framework set good characters and a moving plot that reaches the reader on several levels. (After reading *The Futurians*, I wonder if the book is an allegory for Pohl's life in some ways with *Gateway* symbolizing the treacherous world of science fiction and/or literature, and the ventures outward to look for alien relics representing the quest for success in a fickle field, often resulting in ruined lives or even death. The fate of the protagonist's companions in his last journey and the protagonist's guilt over being lucky enough to win the prize could be a haunting metaphor for Pohl's feelings for all his friends in the SF field who never made it to the heights he did for one reason or another. Well, it's haunting either way.) This is a striking example of what can be done in science fiction, without having to come up with new wild and crazy cosmological ideas or ways to build a better mousetrap.

Theodore Sturgeon and Fritz Lieber have been doing it for years, to some extent.

And yet, I detect in much modern SF (that I read anyway--I'm starting to try to obey Sheffield's dictum, and finding that it helps) a weird kind of stagnation. It's almost like we're trying to change too much, the wrong way. Everything we do is to try to top the next guy's idea...or so it sometimes seems. We know each other...and each other's work...too well for comfortable working room. On one extreme we have writers who are putting retreats on old structures (the best Heinlein juvenile I've read for sometime is Jerry Pournelle's *Exiles to Glory*) and on the other are strange pieces comprehensible only to those with wide reading in the SF field.

Conversely, there has been work done by writers using much of the best science fiction and fantasy has to offer, but handling it in an accessible, reasonably deep manner. The result, at least in one case I know of, is a popular, rich writer who write engrossing books: Stephen King. His first book is an old SF idea: the gifted child (this one telekinetic) runs amok under pressure -- *Carrie*. His second book is a loving tribute to Hammer Films and vampires -- *Salem's Lot*. His third book was a wonderful blend of science fiction and fantasy, about a little kid with telepathy and what happens when his parents bring him to an old haunted hotel -- *The Shining*. I understand his fourth novel concerns a future bubonic plague (*The Stand*). What distinguished these books? Certainly not the plots -- taken from a cynical SF/Fantasy point of view, we've seen them over and over again. Yes --but this time they are done better than before. King utilizes other influences. He openly acknowledges his debt to films and the work of John D. MacDonald...and yet there is obviously so much more to the man's work. It grips you on several levels, and even if you know how and why it's gripping you, you can't tear it away until the end.

I think the man is pointing the way to a possible future for science fiction and fantasy writing.

I think that's enough now. That is my opinion. I'd like to hear any ideas on the subject...discussion, etc. In conclusion, I want to tell you something personal.

After I graduated from college in 1973, I went to Europe for five months. Just touring and vagabonding. I read books, and absorbed the various cultures presented as much as time allowed. I met different people (I travelled alone, which made me more open to meet people) and had fun and many curious experiences. Most of the time, though, I spent in London.

There I watched a lot of English TV. I went to museums of painting and of history. I saw over fifty different plays on the various stages there, including such artists as Laurence Olivier, Diana Rigg, Alec Guinness, Ralph Richardson, and a whole slew of other excellent actors. All in all, it was the most culturally rich period of my life -- and one of the most exciting.

Before I went over to Europe and such artistic immersion (and self-introspection brought about by all the different lifestyles I saw represented, all the ideas and philosophies) I had written some science fiction stories. They did not sell. They lacked...I could tell they had potential if only in odd glimmers of the writing...but they didn't have the necessary electricity of enthusiasm and sincerity and craftsmanship that crackles between the lines of salable fiction.

When I got back, I was a happier person. I started to write more. And I started to sell.

Now, I realize that I am happiest when a flood of positive and thoughtful stimuli is flowing through me. All sorts of books, non-fiction and fiction...Art. Music. Television. Theatre... Just like in Europe. I produce more with this varying diet.

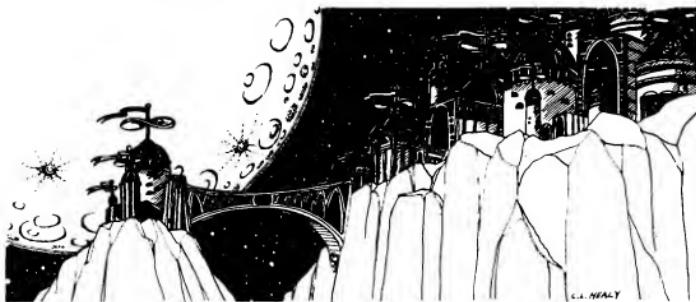
I had just about given up reading SF when I went to Europe. And I came back with a different sort of enthusiasm for it. I realized that it was a tool with which I could express myself...and with all the input and thought over that input, I actually had things to express.

I feel this is the case with SF itself. To grow in its natural course, it needs more input from diverse sources, more dissemination into modern and popular culture. We should not fear its loss of identity...rather, we should be aware that this process will strengthen its identity.

For as in any other artform of validity, there are things that science fiction can express that on other form can express quite so well.



PARANOID CRITICAL STATEMENTS



JOHN SHIRLEY

In the May '78 SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, Harlan Ellison said, quite openly, that the SF awards are merely aggrandized popularity contests and that he was interested in winning them simply because he knows, as a professional, that it will make him money to do so. Winning an award increases the probability your book will be purchased by a publisher, taken seriously by the advertising department (all important), and (maybe) given a certain amount of extra attention by the bookstore browser who is the patron saint of royalties. Ellison has won so many awards that he can say this safely and not care if he loses out on the "popularity contest," as a result. I can't recall having heard another award winner speaking so frankly about awards; I may have missed someone, to be sure.

Of course, with the Nebula award it's necessary that the winning piece be fairly well-written in addition to the author having a certain amount of "political" pull or other strings of influence.

There are exceptions to the popularity contest rules. Occasionally an unknown writes something that somehow snags a lot of attention, gets itself anthologized ... *Flowers for Algernon*, for instance ... though the writer is unfamiliar to the voters on a more personal level. But even here, while the writer has done nothing to cozen to the Nebula Committee, hasn't gotten drunk with the right people or whatever -- still, he or she has done nothing to offend. An innocuous writer may win as well as a writer who's badgered people into paying attention to him or her -- Ellison for instance -- but not a writer who has done more angering than charming.

Just hypothesizing, of course. For the sake of argument.

Actually, I think that Ellison has deserved to win at least two of the SF awards given him. No more than three, tops. Don't get snippy, Harlan, that's a compliment. While it's true that Ellison has shamelessly used the SF field and its awards, dumping the unpleasant aspects of it when he has no longer needed it, still he was right in telling Sheffield off, in his letter in the previous issue of this magazine. Ellison should not be labelled a "Science Fiction

Writer" and no reason he should be stuck in the ghetto, publishing-wise. Sheffield's need to preserve the contemptuously recognizable boundaries of the field is an outgrowth of adolescent (maybe late adolescence) insecurity and territorial imperative. Sheffield is fucked to take, Ellison's words out of context, too, in his attempt at a cutting dissection.

Face facts, Sheffield. All of you: the publishing field is highly competitive, cut-throat in some ways, extremely commerce-minded, trendy, greedy, image-conscious, callous, and BIG. You want to make a living as a writer in it, you got to hustle. Sell sell sell sell. Whether unconsciously (as with, say, Ursula Le Guin) or consciously as with Ellison, you've got to push your work any way you can, and you've got to orient much of it to fit the needs of publishers and not your own aesthetic preferences. Usually Sad but true. So, Ellison exploited SF and its awards -- he had no choice and I don't blame him at all. I just say, don't kid yourself ... Not that, as he pointed out, he hasn't helped a lot of writers along the way, young hungry writers (okay, maybe he fed off their hero worship or had other motives ... so who knows what Ghandi's real motives were?) and he almost single-handedly turned the SF field around and, made it look at itself critically. He and Damon Knight and Blish. So let the guy alone on that one ... But (and this is the point that "I'm thank-god-a-sight-of-relief coming to at last) admit to yourself that if he used you, that others have, are and will.

Now, it's common knowledge that Good Ol' Harlan more than once stacked the deck just a bit by sending xeroxes of his manuscripts to SFWA members when award-voting time was rolling around. Do I blame him for that? Not at all. It was a survival technique, and Harlan's fairly open about his use of such things. Is it right, though? Maybe not, unless -- the awards themselves are wrong. In which case it doesn't matter. And that's my theory, just now. The awards are meaningless and very possibly corrupt. Why not? The rest of American Society is worm-eaten by corruption -- why not the SFWA and Hugo and Campbell awards? What makes us so special that we can avoid the

corruption eating at big business and politics? We're all carrots in the same stewpot. I respect the art of publicity generation. There are a great many laudable people who do it better than Harlan. Like Warhol and David Bowie and Norman Mailer and Gore Vidal. (The only reason they do it better than Harlan is because they have channels open to them unavailable to Harlan, at this time; Harlan would eat the world if he could, like all shining megalomanicas -- but he very much wants to stop struggling and go to that final ultimate peace, the Deathbird peace, the *Wine Has Been Left Open Too Long* sleep.)

I sing in a new wave rock band called The Delusions of Grandeur and the other night a hippie and his friends were sneering at us during a concert, he came up and belched in my face and said "Fuck this sadomasochistic faggot shit." I'm neither gay nor sadomasochistic, but that's not what pissed me off -- it's when he called our music shit. So I hit him, and knocked him down, and I was going to hit him again when a bottle -- a Budweiser bottle -- took me out of the melee and I came to my senses in a car. His friend had broken a bottle on my cranium. I was all covered with blood and there was glass that had to be painstakingly picked from my scalp at the Emergency room. I've got eight stitches in the back of my head and a bare spot where they shaved it and I lay there on the table with the doctor joking with the nurses as he pulled amber slivers from my skull and thought: "What the fuck do I need this noise for?" But did I quit the band? No, and it wasn't the first time I've been attacked on stage. Each time I got disgusted and thought "What do I need this noise for?" But I'm singing tomorrow night, my lyrics my group and my risk.

Why? Cause I'm a compulsive performer, like all good performers. Always will be. I'm addicted. I can't give up. Neither can Ellison, though he's doing a very different thing than I; but the drive is the same. That's the only thing that really links he and I, besides that we're both artists. A drive. Our directions for the upclimb, if up it is, are dissimilar. But we both need to go for it so badly it hurts. This column should be called The Point Is... Well, the point of this parenthetical digression is: When artists seem to use you, it may not be 'right' -- but they can't help themselves. And it might be a good thing, in the long run, because you might not have looked otherwise, and you might miss something worthwhile if your nose, and even mine, isn't rubbed in it now and then. It's a good thing when the writers are good -- but most of the time the use of the publicity machine is given to mediocre writers, artists; disco literature, muzak cover-paintings. Neutral and familiar and stylish but not challenging. So BEWARE. Be careful. Be critical. Be wary of Hype. But forgive them for it.)

The last grandstand I can knowledgeably attribute to Ellison was his display of himself, highly satirically symbolic whether or not it was intentional, in the window of the L.A. bookstore; the writing marathon where he sat like A Product on display and produced the claptrap that Ferman later printed in *The Mag of Fantasy*. And SF, some apologetically elaborate title I've forgotten (Chocolate Alphabet...?) and which Ferman wouldn't have printed, obviously, had the name on the material been, say, Lisa Tuttle. Out of her, he'd have demanded quality. But business is business... Very possible, Harlan did nothing to push his winning "Jeffy was Five" story. I dunno. But I do know that it beat out a John Varley story and JOHN VARLEY IS WAY OVERDUE FOR AN AWARD, IF ANYONE DESERVES ONE. I liked the Jeffy story. It was good. But Varley's piece was far more imaginative, fresher, and just plain more deserving. But Ellison won out of sheer MOMENTUM. Name association! Name Familiarity! That widely used principle for electing congressmen (most of the time they don't bother with the issues in the billboards. Just VOTE SMITH, with his picture. See it often enough and suggestion does the rest...) and selling tooth paste. That's the reason Asimov won for the innocuous short story, *BICENTENNIAL MAN*. And for THE GODS THEMSELVES: Name familiarity and, maybe, affection for a real nice, entertaining guy.

I think we see awards through a backwards telescope. We think we're seeing things enlarged but, not knowing the scope is reversed, we're seeing it small. Look at the larger viewpoint and ask yourself, hey, What Good Are They Really? Even the Pulitzer prize. The best that can

be said of awards is they bring unknowns into the open -- when unknowns win. But how about all the people overlooked? If there were no awards, I suspect we'd look at our respective fields of art more thoroughly, without the narrow focus provided by some anonymous committee somewhere. We might not have overlooked JG Ballard for profession or Bruce Townley for the fanartist kudos. Best way to award is by displaying. Print them, don't give them glossy totems and backpats. The process of giving awards tends to narrow things to some select bunch's thin spectrum band of aesthetics; we overlook too much. It's like the Zen principle of total cognition. A great many Westerners assume that Oriental philosophy advocates a withdrawal, an inward turning, or a contemplation of some narrow nub of being. No, the best of it, especially the Japanese Zen Masters and The Method of the Siddhas, advocates that we give all things equal attention the mediocre must be examined critically and furiously; the spectacular examined critically and furiously; the spectacle of awards is too much like a game of darts; at best it's an approximate jab at what is significant in an aesthetic field. It's over-emphasized and backward looking.

But then, if I felt that it was really legit, as objective as it could be, maybe I could be persuaded that it's useful.

But WHO chooses the Campbell awards? I've heard various rumors to the effect that it's decided by "influential figures in fandom" who are picking their friends, one by one." But I don't know. How about a letter from whoever is back of these awards? Old time fans/pros might know how it's done, but a great many of us don't, so cough up the data. —

I asked Damon Knight what he thought of all this and he said, "I don't know what to do about the awards. We had a system that seemed to me to work at one time, but that may be just because ORBIT was getting the awards. It was a system that took a certain amount of effort and efficiency to keep it running, and when that leaked out the whole thing went to hell... But I remind myself that under any system, when there are more than two candidates in a category, there will always be a majority of members who think the wrong story won. Little as I like the recent awards, I would not want to see them abolished." But he did not address my question, "What use are they?" No one so far has given me any answer to that one, except "They make writers and artists rich." And what is the old system he's referring to, and how did it "go to hell"? (He didn't have time to say, he was packing for a writer's conference in Bogota. No kidding; they're having simultaneous translations). I'm not hip to this, I admit it; I don't know how the old 'system' differs from the new. I'd like to.

Give me data.

...seemed to me to work at one time, but that may be just because ORBIT was getting the awards... Now we're getting at the truth! People who've won awards or hope to (the majority of pros fall into the last category) are bound to defend the need for them.

Me? Maybe I'm just making trouble, hoping something interesting and productive will come from it. Or -- maybe I've got a conscience.

I suspect that those people not directly involved in the awards process, especially the Campbell award, think they know more about the process than they really do. Is the procedure really so different from the Oscar selections? Why have George C. Scott and Marlon Brando and others recently refused those awards, denounced them? What do they know that we don't?

It's high time that all the details, every detail, of this burdensome ritual be published -- for those of us young enough to be new to it, and for updates on any possible recent modifications. For all to see and dissect. What really happens, analytically, when awards are given?

In my opinion, the awards are totally useless, except to the individual authors they enrich. And, perhaps, they offer some diverting excitement. Probably, they were created to assuage the egos of authors who recognized that SF was not given a fair shake by critics and the literate; these writers felt a need for an official pat on the back, something to reinforce their sense of generic worth. The awards made them feel that SF was not merely Buck Rogers stuff, that it had its own proud standards... and that these standards reflected on the authors. If the academics wouldn't give SF writers pulitzer prizes, well then they'd just make their own prizes. Now -- whatever the original

motive -- the awards are supported and preserved year after year simply because the writers voting (yeah, I'm talking about the Nebula and the Campbell just now) hope that it will be around when they're popular enough to win it, God Willing. Since winning brings prestige and money, it's almost a conspiratorial cabal, albeit an unconscious one. Writers who haven't won, hope they will someday; writers who have won, hope they will win more; hence it's "important" that the awards farce be maintained. Sheer greed is the present-day motivation, from what I've been able to find out.

No one seems to question: why bother with the awards? How do they help the readers? They are functional for the readers, some you say, because when a book is marked with an award thereby having less likelihood that their money'll be wasted. Uh-uh, I don't buy that one. It's the writers who have hyped publishers or who've had a conventionally exciting "hit", like Dune, who win Hugos; it's the writers who are notoriously friendly, cozening, and entertaining at cons and SFWA meets, old-time fan mates (Especially when it comes to the Campbell awards) who -- okay, generally speaking -- win the Nebula and Campbell. And that is no proof that the material is going to be superior. Year after year, JG Ballard and William Burroughs and Kotzwinkle and Effinger and others go ignored. Tiptree and Vance are among the few really deserving winners. Usually, it's the same old stuff, reprised. Also, SF awards are given out by a sliver of the SF-reading public; not really representative of the tastes of the majority. So who's to say that what is chosen as Hot Stuff by this sliver is not simply the preference (assuming there's genuine aesthetic judgement going on) of a group of mostly likeminded elitists?

What other reason for the awards, then? The only valid possibility I can envisage is maybe, just maybe, the awards act as carrot in front of the qualitative donkey. The donkey tries harder, because of the awards' lure, to create High Class Stuff so it can win the awards, eat the carrot (eat carrot motherfucker!), effecting a slight upgrading in the field's quality by example, purely as a side-effect. I doubt it, but maybe. I don't think the examples set by the awards have much effect on the overall field. A drop in the slushpie.

Anyway, the ugly truth remains that the awards are the product of greed and are the instrument of exploitation and manipulation of readers. Besides that, they are hyped out of proportion and they are a big waste of time. We just don't have time for them anymore. There's too many ideas begging for attention, too much innovation that needs trying-on-for-size, too much data to process. The awards are psychologically masturbatory good fun, but essentially bullshit and a waste of time and energy.

Naturally, if I hadn't effectively fucked myself out of all hope of winning one of the bastards due to my inflammatory -- possibly merely annoying to some -- columns and outright disregard of my feelings (stupid or incisive, selfish or constructive...) anything said had to be said because I felt it at the time and there was too much unctuous smoke-screening going on. Still, I might be less eager to dispense with them. Or I just might write this article anyway. I dunno. I admit that I wouldn't turn down the first one, I need the money it'd bring. But -- believe it or don't, you cynical yawners -- I'd turn down a second award, wouldn't accept it. Wouldn't really need it; I've got enough confidence in myself that (once I'd got the publics and the publisher's sympathetic attention through acquiring one award) I could ascend on my own without another silvery-gold propaganda stimulus. And really, Geis and Ellison and Silverberg and others who've won a number of awards Kelly Freas too, should -- as others have already suggested -- step down from the competition in that sense. They've got unfair advantage through momentum and the automatic machinery of the American publicity sensitive consciousness. No fair, guys. Let them into a Nebula/Hugo/Whatever Hall of Fame after a certain number of wins, a sort of ultimate pat on the back, and leave it at that. Give Lisa Tuttle, say, a genuine fighting chance. Varley should have won (he's come close) long ago. You greedy assholes... If there were no awards, people would have to make their own decisions about what's good in SF and Fantasy.

Gosh! Do you tremble at the thought? Right now, it's left up to an elite few. The Worldcon crowd is not representative...there's a certain economic bias, for example: not everyone can afford a Worldcon membership, it's a silly luxury. Me, I wouldn't want one, but that's another column. In fact, that's the next column. Why Cons Need To Be Reborn Because They Are One Helluva Fucking Clueless BORE.



HUGOS book, *Hot Stuff*

The Spider and Jeanne Robinson are growing in popularity -- but I think Varley will pull through.

The novella category is a tough one. All are good stories, some great. I think Leiber's "Rite of Spring" deserves it, but it wasn't even nominated. Card will get the Analog Readers' votes. Delany will get the academics vote. Schols will get the young artists' votes. And that leaves all the rest of the votes for Racoona Sheldon (Tiptree) who will win it because of name publicity, taking it from Joan D. Vinge, who I think wrote a better story. Too bad, Joan.

As for short story, like I said, this is Varley's year. But every year is Harlan's year. Harlan Ellison will win this just like the Nebula, for a good standard Harlan story that's got a lot of publicity. Tough. Tiptree is an off chance to win.

Dramatic Presentations: STAR WARS, STAR WARS, STAR WARS. It can't lose. THE HOBBIT and WIZARDS were bad news, to a large extent. A record could only win in an off year, and Close Encounters just didn't come close to STAR WARS' popularity. Hell, it deserves it.

I hope and pray Freas doesn't win again as Pro Artist. But he or Sternbach or Di Palma will, in a year that Steve Fabian deserves it more than ever.

I have a bad fear that Ben Bova, or even worse George Scithers, will win the professional editor award. Too bad, because if doing a very good job under the worst of circumstances counts anything, Jim Baen deserves a Hugo. But I don't think he, or Carr or Ferman (both good editors) have a chance.

The amateur magazine (fanzine) category is boring. SF REVIEW or LOCUS will probably take it, even though both publishers make a living off their magazines. Both are excellent, but I think both should have withdrawn. Actually, MAYA deserves it this year (of those nominated), but they'll get theirs next year in London anyway...

For fan writer, it's the same people again. Gile will win, or maybe Brown or Wood. I pick No Award, that would shake everybody up. Or maybe D'Amassa should get it...

If there's one place fans vote with less intelligence than the pro artist category, it's the fan artist category. Foglio is nominated again, and I pray last year's travesty will not be repeated. Gilliland and Canfield both deserve Hugos, it's a toss up.

Elizabeth Lynn really deserves the Campbell Award, but so does Donaldson. I have a great fear though that fan recognition will give the award to Chalker...

It'll be close, but I think Le Guin will win the Grand Master of Fantasy. The Shining deserves the fantasy novel award, but won't get it. Neither will Leiber, who also deserves it, or Donaldson likewise. Tolkien will win, his name is all it will take.

Well, that's it. Let me know how I did.

INTERVIEW:

C. J. CHERRYH

BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

THRUST: How do you go about creating an imaginary world?

CHERRYH: I work a great deal from my archeological background, and I have probably in my mind about ten or twenty cultures from the origins of their civilization to their decline. By the substitutions of compatible cultural items from one culture to another, and a little bit of just grabbing the entire box and shaking and seeing what pieces come together, I can construct a plausible social system. I also, of course pulling a smattering of knowledge of astronomy and other items to help with the biology -- I had a prolonged contact with human genetics via my roommate, and had a little bit of scientific background. So I've had sort of a Renaissance education in both the humanities and the sciences, and this has helped a bit.

THRUST: At what point does an imaginary world become an imaginary country, the difference being it's not really another planet but a non-existent country in the Orient or something.

CHERRYH: I do try to imagine a complete globe, with all land masses and a plausible relationship of them on to another, geologically speaking. Then I attempt to imagine how much contact at this particular technological level could have taken place between these cultures. At a very low technological level, the contamination or contact would be minimal, if you have a wide separation of water or anything else. So you would essentially be dealing with a country, even if you were writing a first contact story. However, if you're dealing with a much more advanced civilization, you do have to take into account that an alien species would also have its nationalities, its political factions, its religious divisions, and possibly a number of other factors which we have not thought of, being human. So I do try, even if I do not bring it into the novel, to have a mental picture of whether I am dealing with a complex, polynatural culture, or one that is essentially one country, as you say.

THRUST: Frequently I see science fiction planets which are so anthropomorphic as to be no stranger than Hong Kong. It's not convincing as another species. I think the biggest offender is Harry Harrison's third Deathworld book in which they land on another planet and there's Genghis Khan, and he's even named Temuchin. How do you avoid that and still make it comprehensible to your human audience.

CHERRYH: When I construct an alien species I try to go back to the drives which would be motivating this species as opposed to humanity. Some will be

compatible. Some will be perhaps entirely different or in a sideways direction from humanity. I do try to avoid to a certain extent an obvious parallel, unless I am dealing with an environment which is utterly terrestrial. For instance, in *Brothers of Earth*, you have a completely terrestrial environment, and in one part of my reasoning I'm thinking to myself that if you're going to grant evolution as an efficient mechanism, then within a given environment you might have a very similar biological organism arising, simply because it was the most efficient. Given similar environment and similar biology, you might then evolve some similarities. However, I would not carry this to say that each species would then have its Hitler, each species its human parallel. I try to imagine what might have gone astray somewhere down the line and perhaps come up with a different answer.

THRUST: I'd guess you'd get a species occupying the same ecological niche, but, as H.G. Wells allegedly said, they might just as readily have feathers. Considering the infinitesimal possibilities of such a thing happening, can you plausibly construct a story around a native species which will pass for *Homo Sapiens*?

CHERRYH: Well sometimes for story reasons it is reasonable to do it. I do have mental reservations about it, and of course you're always at the mercy of the cover artist in that the reader will automatically visualize the characters in your book, no matter how you visualize them, in the terms the cover artist gives you. For instance, I've had people say that the Amaut in *Hunter of Worlds* are very anthropomorphic in some regards, and yet if we had on the cover the Amaut as I visualized them in bodily structure, they're bipedal and bilaterally symmetrical, but human they are not. I imagined their drives as entirely different, which is one of the points in the book, and yet you can have an impression conveyed by a cover, or possibly the reader's own anthropomorphic tendency, to paint in something, that the writer didn't want to be there. I also try to avoid the obvious BEM type critter just for the sake of having one. So it does get to be a problem. Some of it in imagery.

THRUST: An image which threw me off in *Brothers of Earth* went like this: the guy lands on the planet, and the first contact he makes with the native inhabitants is via something which looks very much like a Viking longship. I thought, before the book started getting better, "Oh no, it's STAR TREK parallel evolution again." It was a wrong cue the first time. How can you bring the culture alive so we can see it as alien, before you have a chance to explore it?

CHERRYH: Sometimes you can present an incomprehensible

"to me, writing is daydreaming and getting paid for it"

piece of behavior. That might be one way of going about it. I do like to use shifting viewpoint occasionally, and for the more alien characters I usually try to avoid bringing their viewpoint in fairly early, simply because the reader may not be prepared to understand what I'm doing with this character. Back again to what the reader wants to read into it: he will bring his own conceptions to his reading, and I try to fight against it. I try to anticipate what the reader will think. Now to me, a ship which can move efficiently through the water will have a limited range of shapes. Therefore automatically I'm not going to give these people difficulty by having them build a square ship. A shell ship might be possible, but they're difficult to navigate in the kind of waters I had imagined this culture growing up in, a bottle sea as it were. So I designed what I thought to be an efficient machine, but it never in my mind was a Viking longship. But I had not wished to use machines, so in that kind of a situation the oared vessel was the best I could come up with, without going into a transverse cog and all this sort of development, say a paddle wheel manually propelled back at the rear.

THRUST: But it had a dragon head. That was the cue.

CHERRYH: The dragon or the snake is one of the religious items in the culture. I was not thinking of a Viking ship when I did that. I was thinking of the serpent as the symbol of the wild forces, the sea, the elements of nature, and so on, which went more into the mythology of the people. The Mother of Beasts, as it were. Originally the title of the book was *Children of Ur*, that is the children of the serpent figure. We did change it because of a similarity to another title, which was necessary I think. So we chose another phrase from the book, and that became the title. It carried somewhat the same thought.

THRUST: With all cultures we find have such things we consider to be universal, like religion. Some people have thought otherwise. Did you ever read Lovecraft's "Notes On Interplanetary Fiction"?

CHERRYH: No, I have not. I have not done as much research into literary analysis as I have into anthropology, which itself—anthropos/nan—has a certain bias to it. But considering the basis of our own civilizations, you could say there are about five different bases of civilization as we know it, the food producing unit, the arena of contact or marketplace. You have the people's concept of themselves versus the universe. Religion is one aspect of that. In constructing a story sometimes I will add or subtract an element. I do feel that if an element is subtracted, its absence needs to be accounted for by a given circumstance. I don't believe that any of these elements are likely to be totally absent without some reason lying in the culture. In my mind when the individual begins to consider self versus the universe, certain questions do arise in a thinking species. Unless there is a biological blindsight within the organism, this will happen. For instance, the Regul in *The Faded Sun*: Kesrith, having no imagination -- zero -- and operating only by intake, would have a different view of religion. That self versus the universe concept would be vastly different in that species than in humanity. It would vary with the species and with other items of their psychological makeup.

THRUST: What other writers do you think have done this sort of thing well?

CHERRYH: Immediately Jack Vance pops to mind. I like his imagination, particularly in the areas of perception and language, which is one of my favorite concerns, the concepts of perception lying at the root of language and communication, that it might not by sight or hearing or other senses. Larry Niven's first contact stories. I enjoy any creation that has a depth of culture behind it, that at least provokes you to wonder well, if they had been given this particular trait, what would have resulted? I can sort of work in my mind along with the writer, imagining along with him, how he had rationalized this particular universe.

THRUST: How long had you been writing before you started to sell?

CHERRYH: I began writing when I was ten years old. The first thing I ever wrote was a novel, and I wrote about a novel a year for roughly twenty years and stowed them all in the closet. Of course many of them were rewrites of the earlier novels. As I would gain more skill I would do them again. I had always intended to be a writer. As a matter of fact I wasn't even through with my first book and I had made up my mind that was what I was going to do.

THRUST: Doesn't it take an enormous amount of patience to write twenty books without publication, just for the closet?

CHERRYH: To me writing is daydreaming and getting paid for it. Writers simply organize it and get it on paper. I enjoy what I do. I enjoy it enormously, and although people have well said only an idiot would write not for money, still I get such enjoyment out of it that I would probably be writing if I weren't being paid for it.

THRUST: Well there's something in my makeup which prevents me from trying more than once at a novel, if I've never sold one, even though I have sold short stories. I'm afraid of the prospect of doing that much work for nothing.

CHERRYH: To me it isn't for nothing if you've had the joy of creating the entire world and seeing the cultures develop over a long time. The short story is not my native medium. I never wrote a short story, never went the magazine route, and eventually after I'd sold three novels, Harlan Ellison cornered me and said, "Why don't you write short fiction?" with the implication that I had a blindsight somewhere. I began thinking, well short fiction is rather like haiku. It sharpens your wits and teaches you to think in a concentrated way in a given situation. This has to be good for your art, so I began developing that side of it. I do enjoy writing them, but I have difficulty getting around to doing them, because if you give me any sort of an idea, I can plot a novel in six hours. It's just the way my imagination runs.

THRUST: Presumably Harlan was after a story for *Last Dangerous Visions*.

CHERRYH: Actually I had met him when he came to the University of Oklahoma. We happened to be at dinner. The whole group had gone out to dinner, and we got into conversation and Harlan, of course, is short story oriented, and he asked me what I might have done that he might have recalled. I think that was how it all started. But at any rate, I allowed how I wouldn't trespass into that medium, and afterwards I began thinking perhaps I shall try it. I have since sold at least two, so I figure I must not be a total flop at short stories.

THRUST: What are your writing methods like, for actually putting a book together?

CHERRYH: They're very eccentric and it's difficult to explain, but I may start at any given point in a story, and I may have some rough idea how it ends. I'm not always sure how it begins or whether what I have just imagined is the beginning or the middle. I just start writing, and if I discover that's the middle of the story then I go back and do a beginning for it. In others I imagine a great beginning and I have no ending for it, and then I sit and stew for a while until gradually an ending suggests itself. But quite frequently, by the time I get to the ending the characters have taken over by that point and refused to abide by their appointed ending in the first place, at least in small ways. So quite often I'm right down to the wire, two chapters from the end and I know how it ends, and I know where we are, and the characters from this point write their own book, because I know them so well their reactions will be reasonable according to their own personalities. I have to see which one moves first. They're all lined up waiting and then somebody moves and the other reacts. It's a very illogical process on one level. I also do a bit of painting, and when I need an idea, and when I'm totally lost for an idea, I sit down at the fresh canvas and start painting a landscape. I just choose a set of colors and I develop a landscape out of those. Then I imagine a figure standing in the middle. What is he doing there? What is his situation and where is he coming from? Which is an odd creative process, but it does work.

THRUST: Do you work the details and phrasing in your head and then write it in a reasonable complete version, or do you think on paper?

CHERRYH: I'm a paper thinker. As a matter of fact I never let a novel go out of the house without, before I go to bed that night, going in and typing at least the first two lines of another novel. I never am without a novel in the house. I will work if necessary at two pages a day until I've found out what is going on, and then I may go back for as many as five rewrites of a novel. I will retype an entire page to reposition an adjective. I'm that kind of writer. My constructions just work that way. I can't discipline myself to work in any other way. The creative process is more a agglutinative than anything else. The pieces just add themselves to the mass, and it grows in that fashion.

THRUST: Have you found that the way the creative process works has been changing over the years? Some writers go from the writing in one big spurt method to very careful outlining. For example, Sprague de Camp is a careful outlining type. He apparently was not when he was younger.

CHERRYH: I don't go by outline, because once I've outlined I've essentially written the story and I have no more interest in it. I also don't discuss work that I have in progress for the same reason. Once I have told the story, that is my function, and whether I've told it out loud or on paper, the story is told, and it is then frozen and immutable. My outlines basically consist of ten events I think may happen before the end of the book, and then a list of the characters and all the personal attachments, grudges, feuds, loyalties, and private motives of each character involved. I look like arrows pointing in every direction and that is my outline.

THRUST: What is the most important thing you must accomplish to make the book successful?

CHERRYH: I try to make sure that the book is about something. Not consciously a theme in any sense, but if the book extends itself in too many directions simultaneously, in terms of theme, eventually you have four or five fragments or books pasted together in one whole. To me, plot alone will not hold it. There has to be a common thread throughout the book, which is resolved in the plot. A conflict of some nature which

"above all else, the writer owes the reader a story"

is resolved by the action which happens in the story. I do try to remember above all else that you're telling a story, not advancing social theory. If I were doing that I would be writing non-fiction. So I try to entertain. I may occasionally slip a bit of personal philosophy in here and there. You can detect it, but I do try to remember that above all else the writer owes the reader a story.

THRUST: Has Donald Wollheim shaped you as a writer as he has some people? You may have heard that when the first Delany book came in, it was, so the story goes, unpunctuated, no capitals, and simply crazy, and Wollheim straightened him out. Has he influenced you in any way?

CHERRYH: I have never detected any point at which my manuscripts have been edited. What I write and how it comes out are exactly the same thing, give or take typographical errors. I do find Don a very easy editor to work with in one respect. There are some people who make me very nervous as a writer. I feel they have a certain expectation and I would have to be constantly running to meet this. It would be emotionally difficult to work with. I would feel like I was under pressure. Don will gently suggest, I may not take that direction, but it's always a stimulating idea. He never seems to mind whether I take that direction or not, but it does help. It gives me something against which to react. I've felt very easy in working in this fashion, with a confidence that what I write will end up as what is published, and a confidence that I can work in my own way, without being forcibly directed in one way or another by economic pressure, and so on. So for me, he's a good editor to work with.

THRUST: Do you find any restrictions in science fiction along the lines of what you can and cannot do? Twenty years ago these were obvious.

CHERRYH: I have not met any. I have occasionally in my own field, which is linguistics, and my private interests, which involve inter-linguistic psychology, detected a certain resistance on the part of some readers to consider that field as a science. I think perhaps there have been so many books where there has been a coined language where there is really no reason for there having been such, that some readers are conditioned to regard this as a frill, or not a legitimate science in itself. If there is one restriction I have found, it is the fact that while people will spend a great deal of mental effort figuring out the physics and astronomy of a situation, there may be a little difficulty when dealing with a science or elements of a science which are what you'd call the "soft sciences," although I could cite you procedures and steps within my own field which are extremely rigid and exacting. That is one area. I have not met any difficulty otherwise. I'm a very young writer. I understand from older women writers that there was at one time a restriction as to what you could do in the way of what sex your characters were and what role they had. I have not met this. I feel myself relatively free to do what I please in that regard.

raving & drooling



lou Stathis

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In the first installment of this column, I attempted to sketch out the most common pitfalls to which the lazy or novice science fiction writer might fall victim. Just short of the end (past the raving and well into the drooling) I suggested that joining a writer's workshop might help the writer who hasn't yet gained the ability to see his own work with an objective critical distance. I think workshops can be quite valuable at certain stages of some writers' developments, and I think some experiences I've had in a number of writing workshops could illustrate what I mean.

Some years ago I went to college. Now, this might come as a shock to those of you who've noticed the difficulty I have putting words together coherently, but you can take my word that it's true. It took me a few years to realize the uselessness of that experience, but before I left, one of the less boring things I did was to sign up for a writing workshop with a faculty member, who, it seemed, wished as desperately as I that he were somewhere else. Since the school had no writing program (even though the English faculty was the largest in the university), the department offered only two courses in writing. One was

for serious young poets, which didn't do me any good, and the other for fiction writers. For some asinine reason (SUNY at Stony Brook has thousands of those on file) both courses were offered at the bottom level of the department, down with the Dick and Jane shit for physics majors. This meant that the courses were effectively throwaways. Any meatball who could punch something out on a typewriter could stroll in, and the faculty regarded assignment there as the academic equivalent of a semester in the Gulag Archipelago. Letting my idealism get the best of me, I innocently signed up. About a dozen-and-a-half of us met twice a week for an hour or so, in the usual, stuifingly sterile classroom. Our instructor was a young curmudgeonly type who conducted the class with a minimum of effort and an array of monosyllabic grunts. I found him great fun, but a lousy teacher (he fancied himself a writer) -- most everyone else in the class hated his guts.

The mechanics of the workshop were pretty standard institutional fare: the instructor handed out a sheaf of ditto masters to all at the beginning of the semester, which were to be used for the weekly assignments. First he asked us to write an indoor description, then an outdoor description, the third week it was a Mark Twain-ish "Tall Tale", the fourth a dream sequence, and then a couple of other equally uninspiring things before the final completed short story we were obliged to submit at term's end. All the assignments were handed in typed on the ditto master, and by the next class session the instructor had enough splotchy purple copies of the things to hand out to everyone. He would have looked them all over in the meantime as well, and picked out a couple to be read aloud by the authors and feebly dissected by the class.

For me, the course coincided with the beginnings of my desire to think of writing as something to be taken seriously. I had just struck out as an Astrophysics major and, although I had been writing stories and things for as long as I could write, it was something I never thought very much about. It was a lark, like reading science fiction, and suddenly it seemed like an activity worth looking into. I was basically stumbling around and feeling my way, looking for some guidance. The stuff that I wrote was therefore consciously imitative of what I was reading at the time, with intermittent glimpses of subconscious images left over from my childhood. It was a curious, uncertain blend of ghosts from The Twilight Zone, Outer Limits and Edgar Allan Poe, mixed with the Henry Miller, Philip Dick and French existentialist garbage that I thought was hot stuff at the time. Except for getting practice in focusing my mind on putting words together (one of the first mechanisms of writing a writer must learn), I don't think I got anything out of the class. To blame, I think, was the tone set by the professor and the kindergarten atmosphere that prevailed.

As is true with any social or learning group, a workshop has a cloud of atmosphere that gathers around it, almost taking on a personality all its own. The atmosphere is an important factor in a workshop's success, and the main determining element is the interaction pattern set up among the participants. If someone is assuming the role of the leader -- the professor in this case, or a writer in the case of the Clarion sf workshops -- it fails to him to establish the basic tone of the proceedings. In the college workshop the unresponsive and reticent behaviour of the professor was echoed by the students. There was very little real communication among the participants, and no one seemed interested in making the effort to understand what the others were trying to do. The class only existed for the two sessions per week that it met, and there was never any social interaction amongst us outside of the dreary little room. After a piece had been read, the professor looked to the class for comments and opinions. Usually there were a number of seconds of silence before someone would say something staggeringly profound, like "It was okay." There would be a few more statements along that line, with perhaps a differing of opinion without benefit of explanation or justification, and then some nitpicking about structure or a point of grammar. That's also when someone in the class would wine about a science fictional setting I had used, or I would insult the triteness of their ideas. After that discussion would die down, and the professor would swoop in with his closing remarks. He would usually have the

only comments worth listening to, though it would all be read from the scribbles he would have made earlier on a copy of the piece. As always, his delivery was bored and monotonous, making it seem like he didn't give much of shit about what you had written. Also he would consistently tell me stuff like: "Why don't you dump this science fiction stuff and try some real writing?" I found that I hesitated to ask him very much, whether it was about a technical point or just some advice, because he set himself up as so inaccessible. I felt like I was intruding on his time, asking him a favor, when as a teacher of a workshop it should have been his obligation to make himself available.

What I did discover, though, was that it was worthwhile to read stuff out loud, whether you had an audience or not. You hear things audibly that you might miss through just reading the thing over. This works best for dialogue, of course, where you can hear how real and life-like supposedly spoken words sound. It also serves as a help with the narrative and exposition sections, where awkwardness and poor grammar jumps out at you like a dissonant chord in an otherwise melodic piece of music. I also found that actually to have a copy of someone's piece in front of you encourages nitpicking, which can be both useful (tightening up a piece on the microcosmic scale) and damaging (tearing something apart for small errors while missing the real essence of the thing).

Later, after leaving school and coming home to New York City, I found that I still needed some enforced discipline to keep myself writing. When I noticed an ad in THE VILLAGE VOICE one week for a workshop run by a "professional writer" I gave the number listed a call. The guy was a quiet, shyly polite, effeminate little character who had written some successful plays and seemed to be doing quite well. After he decided that the stuff I had to show him was good enough (aha! Entry Standards!), he invited me to join the group and cough up twenty-five bucks (five for each weekly session). I felt pretty good, because a real writer had looked at some of my stuff and given some amount of approval to what I had done. I was also now able to join a group of certified, professional writers, or at least so I thought. I arrived at the guy's apartment at the appointed time and found a group of about five people present. There was a kind of uneasy formality in the air, that I thought was due to the participants not knowing each other, and as well to the coldness of the writer's shadowy and cavernous apartment. I thought this feeling of nervous restraint would disappear after a few sessions, since we got to know each other and to an extent that was true. But there was always an undercurrent of discomfort for as long as the workshop lasted.

The other participants in this workshop included a weird guy in his thirties who taught at a typically anarchic NYC High School, and wanted to quit badly to do comedy writing for a living. He had already sold some jokes to a couple of low-grade Borscht Belt comics, and was at work on a humorous instruction manual for teachers of professo-phagous adolescents. There was also a soft-spoken grandmotherly type who wrote nice stories for women's magazines, and an intensely neurotic young woman who needed to break out of her trade magazine editing trap but couldn't muster the courage or self-esteem that was needed. A typical session would begin with the young teacher reading a chapter from his book, which he thought was tremendously funny and couldn't read without periodically falling off his chair with paroxysms of hysteria. The others would politely laugh along, and then echo his bewilderment at the numerous publishers' rejections he was accumulating.

I found the thing puerile and based on obvious targets for its humor, but he really didn't pay me much mind as I was the only one to say this (also, due to the lack of confidence I had in my opinions at the time, my feelings were phrased in the most uncertain and wishy-washy terms I could think of). The grandmother would follow with a story (she would show up with a new one just about every week) that was very tidy, well-constructed, uncritically self-contained and so full of nice that it made me gag. Everyone made the appropriate noises of approval. She'd smile appreciatively, and that would be it. The wacko female would take the spotlight next and read some embar-

rassingly confessional, thinly disguised autobiographical stuff that was written okay but lacked a disciplined focus. It was all too nakedly ego-drive, too tied with her need for approval to be really successful as fiction. As for me, well, I was into weird stream-of-consciousness fantasy at the time, and I would show up with a couple of pages of perverse dream sequences that I had knocked off the night before. I was usually told how good they were, but that was probably because the others were too baffled by them to have any negative opinions. The things had some amount of emotional power, and that I think is what they were responding to. But I never picked up anything constructive either from the other participants or the guy I was forking over the five big ones to.

The workshop fell apart after less than a dozen sessions when the leader decided, correctly, that we were going nowhere. We had no feeling for ourselves as a group, and no one had very much to offer the others. The writer running it also wasn't doing his job -- his presence was much too nebulous and his perceptions never penetrated beneath the surface of the writing. It became a regular ego-stroking routine; we all grew to expect praise without any discriminating criticism. Nothing was really accomplished. Encouragement from your peers is very important, but non-specific praise is just about worthless. This was a dead-end, and once it was shown we couldn't push past it, any value the workshop might have had for any of us disappeared.

That's enough for the bummers. On the plus side, there is the group in the Virginia-Maryland-Washington, D.C. area calling itself "The Vicious Circle" to which most of the contributors to this magazine belong. It is a regular weekly workshop that follows the common "Milford Method" (not really the name, I'm just calling it that for convenience sake) in which a piece is passed around for everyone to read before each criticizes it in turn. The manuscript is physically passed from person to person, around the circle as each has his/her shot at ripping the story apart. The writer is supposed to not interrupt at any point to defend himself, and he/she is expected to listen with patience and attention. This "rule" isn't always adhered to, but since the group is friendly and informal there is no friction or purposeless, self-justifying posturing. I've visited this group two or three times, and I found on those occasions that things worked quite well. First of all, the stuff submitted was of high quality -- these guys can write! Equally important is that they also criticize with acuity, intelligence and directness. There is no sparing of fragile egos, no soft-pedalling of the truth. When a story is

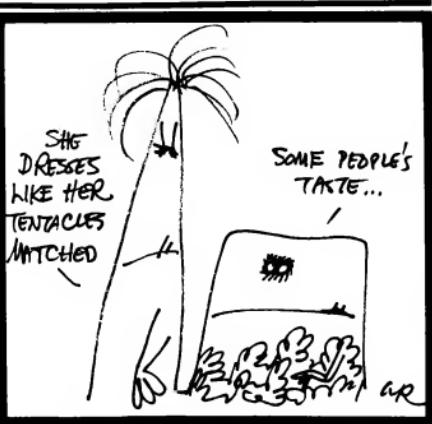


brought before the group it is done so with the understanding that it is fair game for criticism on any level. That understanding is part of the healthy give-and-take that a good workshop develops. Everyone is taking a risk when he/she brings something in to be discussed, but it is a shared experience. When everyone dishes it out and takes it as well there is a trust that builds among the participants. There is little venting of spleens or clashing of egos that so often happens, stuff that has so little to do with the purpose of the group.

Last summer here in New York City a group of us got together and formed a small sf writing workshop. It was an idea that I had been kicking around for some time, and I finally got up the energy to do it. I felt that I needed something that I wasn't getting: a forum of disciplined criticism for what I and others were trying to do, and also a social situation more intensely involved with writing and science fiction than the normal run of NYC fan gatherings. It was quite simple to set up, and not hard at all to find a small group of interested, compatible people. In the year of our existence we've evolved a loose triumvirate in order to run things. The three of us: myself, Dell sf editor Jim Frenkel and Moshe Feder (currently the sf reviewer for PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY), discuss all matters pertaining to the workshop and reach a joint decision on things. This way there is no steady "leader" so that any of the group can slip into or out of that role as they choose. Other members include two trade magazine writers, a film editor, a photographer, a dancer, a fan artist, a teacher and an occasional useless degenerate such as myself. Our meetings are about once every two or three weeks, and we employ the reading aloud system. I prefer that way to the passing around bit, but ideally I would like the stories to be both read aloud and simultaneously perused. Unfortunately, that's expensive and also takes a bit of organization which all of us seem to shy away from. A couple of us have sold an odd thing here and there, and one of our members, Ross Chamberlain, has a novel making the rounds. But for the most part we are beginning writers, amateurs. There is a low volume of stuff because none of us goes at it full time (a serious lack, I think) and even worse, we've produced very few finished products. But what this group has going for it is the smoothest blending of personalities and abilities of any workshop I have experienced. We are all friends, comfortable in each other's presence and respectful of all the opinions expressed. We seem to have a good idea of each other's shortcomings as well.

Since the group is so small, and we all get on so well, things can be pretty chaotic and still work. After someone has read something the floor is open to any comment from anyone who cares to begin. The writer is permitted to fight back, and the rest of us permitted to gang up on the poor slob if we so choose. Great fun. I really enjoy watching us interacting and complementing each other. Some of us are analytical, quick to examine the writing for what it is, and others are taken more with mood and emotion, seeing the prose from what it tries to effect in the reader. The criticism builds and reinforces itself like a wave, cresting with a surge of insight and excitement. We are like a pack of hounds sometimes, catching the scent of a particularly fragrant fox. Once the trail is fixed by the lead dog there's a great howling as the whole pack lights off after the quarry, yapping and panting. There is uncertainty in the tentative comments that immediately follow the reading, and then a growing conviction as someone begins nibbling on the crux of the story. Once we fix on what it is that needs examination, there is a mass revelation and a rush to add insights and ideas. There is marvelous interplay with directions and suggestions, and on a good day I always leave with a pleasant, drained-of-creativity feeling. I'm satisfied that I've put my brain to good use (and we've had some truly exhilarating idea-tripping sessions), and there is a tangible release of pent-up energies that leaves me invigorated. That's the kind of atmosphere a workshop needs. It is that that pushes you onward, and makes you want to rush home and climb all over your typewriter. This heady blend of fervor, guilt (over having not produced anything that week), confidence, need for approval, desire to improve and competition with your friends is the best stimulant I know of.

There is a danger in all this excitement: you must always guard against confusing another writer's comments with how he/she would've written what you've done. You want advice and another critical perspective, not rewriting directions. It is your story and no one else's, so whatever those jerks tell you just remember that it's your fingers that are pushing the keys, and your name that goes under the title. A writer is always on his own.



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COUNTER THRUSTS

letter column



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Response to Mr.
Sheffield's response to
his original analysis of
me and my work is

unnecessary. What he says changes nothing; he continues to try categorizing me as he wishes to be categorized. But if being lumped with Mr. Sheffield as a "Sci-fi writer" means I have to write for the magazines for which he writes, at the rates he is sometimes paid (and sometimes not get paid at all), I would sooner go back to driving truck or laying brick. Fortunately, that alternative is not one I have to think about. The long struggle has freed me to a large extent. // Nor will I respond to his article in *Thrust* #10, his sure-fire method for becoming a great sf writer. I've spent entirely too much time on Mr. Sheffield already, though I confess it would have been far more deleterious to my soul's well-being had I just shrugged and ignored him, as so many of your readers and my friends advised. Nonetheless, a peculiar thing has happened recently re Mr. Sheffield and that article in *Thrust* #10. // Long before I'd seen the magazine (and we have the good offices of David Bischoff, who gave me a copy when he was in California, to thank for my having seen it all), I began getting letters from your readers. People whose names I'd never even heard suddenly began writing to me, asking me to reply to what they perceived as very fucked-up advice on how to write (their phrase, oddly enough, not mine). I received four letters in about a week. Each of the correspondents seemed quite exercised about Mr. Sheffield's advice, and wanted me to play hired gun in shooting him down. // Well, Dave gave me the magazine and I read Sheffield's article. Oh my. // Look: Dave and Tom Monteleone and several other people have told me that Charles Sheffield is an absolutely splendid man, and a good writer. They lament this obvious rancor because they say we would like each other. That may be. I'll have to read all of Sheffield's published works -- which I intend to do immediately -- before I would be willing to venture even a

tentative opinion (as opposed to Mr. Sheffield, who feels it okay to refer to me as a "bandwagoner," a label exceedingly insulting and opprobrious). That would provide at least a workable basis on which to judge him as a writer. The splendiferousness of him as a human being is probably beyond my capacity to establish. We'll very likely never meet, but if we do common courtesy will no doubt be the order of the day, despite my hooting in print at what I take to be impertinent and unjustified transgression into my life. // And so, because of the high marks given Mr. Sheffield by people whose friendship I honor, and whose opinions I frequently share, I have opted not to go against Mr. Sheffield in his views on writing. This should not be taken as agreement with Mr. Sheffield's thesis, which I consider absolutely weird and counterproductive to anyone seeking a career as a writer. It is merely an abstaining vote. // Rather than promulgating such berserk ideas about how to be a writer, Mr. Sheffield would better serve your writer/readers if he wrote a detailed analysis of how to get payment out of such magazines as *AMAZING* and *GALAXY*, two periodicals for which he labors in the noble vineyards of "sci-fi". The former a magazine whose persistent screwing and cavalier treatment of writers has netted it a universal boycott by Science Fiction Writers of America, the latter a magazine whose publisher is so notorious for not paying his bills that he has personally been dragged into Manhattan small claims court by people whose work has been used and for which they have not been compensated until they scream legally, and who tells his editor not to keep bothering him about paying people that "it's none of your damned business." Mr. Sheffield's talent notwithstanding, he is a man who might, by some, be termed a "scab" and by others an "amateur" for suffering such indignities. // I would not call him either. I don't know him. Though I am assured Brutus is an honourable man. So are we all, honourable men. I will say merely this: Mr. Sheffield's Epistle to the Thessalonians, advising how to become a great sf writer, is as french-fried a piece of codswallop as I've read lately, and should be ignored on pain of having one's Muse sicken and drop into pleurisy and croak. // P.S. A really unworthy thought occurs to me. I voice it merely to scotch whatever such insinuations might be made by your readers who, misguidedly thinking they were leaping to my aid, would bump Mr. Sheffield on this point. To wit: in the past a number of fans with aspirations of notoriety, either in fandom or as professionals, have picked silly fights with me, knowing my lack of restraint, and have sought to build their own reputations using me and what little I've managed to accomplish, as sort of a footstool to gain prominence. It's never worked because in the final analysis it's the amount of individual talent the attacker possessed that weighed most heavily in final judgement. One of *THRUST*'s readers who wanted me to take on Sheffield made the suggestion that this was his way of getting himself known. // I utterly reject the idea. Despite my disagreement with what Mr. Sheffield has said about me, and disagree most decidedly with the content of his article on becoming a great sf writer, it is clear that man has the ability to write, and I perceive in his statements a sense of personal ethic. These are clear, and negate any consideration of his using me as a coat-tail. // One final point, addressed to Doug Frazt. In your response to Mike Glicksohn's letter in #10, you say that my departure from "science fiction" would be a loss to the field. Apart from the fact that I don't consider what I write to be sf -- nor does Fred Pohl, nor does Frank Herbert, nor do legions of other sf writers and critics -- I am not leaving science fiction. I am simply leaving the bloody label! What I've always written is what I'll continue to write. Look at my new book, *STRANGE WINE*. Harper & Row will publish on July 5th. Look at it! I urge you, just look at it. Is it any less writing in the genre of the fantastic than other books of mine? It just ain't labeled or packaged as "sci-fi." I leave only an arbitrary ghettoizing categorization, not the work that I've done for the last twenty-five years. // So please try to eschew the rah-rah and look at the realities; stop thinking of science fiction as a monolithic structure and recognize it as an enormously seductive inner circle of the greater literary genre called *fantasy*, and perceive many of us who resist the labeling as elements of the diaspora, moving on and out, but taking

with us the sensibility of the idiom in which we've matured. Surely you will see that is no crime to want to be as good as one can be, to fight against being pigeonholed and thus compelled to rewrite the same stories and themes over and over again.

Isaac Asimov
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Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is known today as a "Sherlock Holmes Writer. He hated Sherlock Holmes. He charged enormous fees to dry up the market and couldn't. He tried to kill Sherlock and had to bring him back. He suffered enormously. I have recently reread his Professor Challenger stories and I tell you right now his science fiction was better than his Sherlock Holmes stories. I once read "White Company" and I tell you now his historicals were better than his Sherlock Holmes stories. In fact, his Sherlock Holmes stories are the least of his works. Nevertheless, he is a "Sherlock Holmes Writer" and nothing he or anyone else can ever do will change that. Do you get my point? Now, please, everyone leave Harlan Ellison alone. He is my friend: I love him; and I hate to see him get so angry. He is a science fiction writer in the only place it counts -- in the minds of people. Nothing you can do will change that. Nothing he can do will change that. So leave him alone.

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This thing with Ellison and Sheffield is getting out of hand. What difference does it make if Ellison doesn't want to be known as a "science fiction writer"? As long as his stories are available, I don't care if he calls them "science fiction", "Fantasy" or "Uncle Harlan's Bedtime Stories". To reply to Sheffield's reply (hopefully Ellison won't waste his time): Ellison has accepted Hugos and Nebulas. He has also accepted an Edgar Award (given by the Mystery Writers of America) and three Writers Guild of America awards for Most Outstanding Television Script. Does that make him a "mystery writer" or a "screenwriter"? Of course not. Now, does Sheffield really think the only reason PENTHOUSE buys Ellison's stories is because of his name? That they don't give a damn about "literary excellence"? I don't think his name is all that well known to the general public and besides, his whole argument is invalidated by this year's Nebula nominations. Ed Bryant's "The Hibakushu Gallery", published in the July issue of PENTHOUSE, received the second most nominations in the Short Story category. Sheffield would probably reply that the SFWA doesn't know what "literary excellence" is either, but then (hopefully) no one will be listening. He also seemed to be confusing things by using the author omniscient viewpoint in letters. "Isn't it obvious that the fans are not the ones who drool over drivel?" No, it isn't. "They want your name..." I kinda doubt if he asked them. "When you write for F & SF, you are read by people who care about writing and ideas." He probably sent out surveys. "...it matters, to me and to every writer and fan." Survey, again. And he talks about illogic? "Hm. Indeed." my ass. // "The Easiest Way To Become A Great SF Writer" is, in my humble opinion, pure, unadulterated garbage. Pigeon-holing stories is bad enough, but doing the same to writers is asinine. And the advice he offers at the end condones the writing of that "junk" he claims to deplore. One only needs to read some of his stories to get an idea of where he's coming from. He writes: "Do you seriously believe that I am buying that junk?" No, just writing it. // Buzz Dixon's letter brings up something which needs to be clarified. He implies that SF readers are in some way superior when compared with the general reader. "Its readers must be willing to accept the rise (or fall) of such sophisticated knowledge as part of the story." I'd like to make an analogy of two. First the Universal horror films of the thirties and forties. Second, the television audience. Now, I realize that people who read SF know more (usually) about science and technology and its applications, but since "superior" and "better" are, like "truth" and "freedom", relative platitudes, we can dismiss any argument which insists that science and technology are

somehow more valid than anything else as being the blindness of perspective. I'm talking about familiarity. The Universal horror films of the thirties and forties presented stories and worlds which were alien, beyond our experience. I was scared shitless after seeing things like

"The Wolfman" and "Frankenstein" for the first time (in the early sixties). But as I saw more and more of the films from the series ("Frankenstein Meets The Wolfman", "House of Frankenstein", "House of Dracula", etc.), I felt at home. Larry Talbot was my friend. And the monster (in whatever incarnation) became an uncle. See what I mean? I felt completely at home in the gnarled tree, fog-shrouded world of Hollywood's Transylvania. It's the same way with science fiction. FTL drives, blasters, transfer booths, etc. may seem strange at first, but after -- while they become familiar as your home town. You begin to feel comfortable whizzing through the galaxy, encountering aliens, becoming superhuman, and any of the other experiences which are to science fiction as the undying vampire, the revived monster, and the eternally cursed werewolf are to horror films. The future can become as homely as the present, or the past. Science and technology, the development of it, the rise and fall of it, and all other aspects of it become commonplace, just like Transylvania. They may seem strange and exciting at first, but then acclimation sets in and the experience is reduced to the feeling that "I belong here. I know this place and the people in it." Television is worse, but it's the same thing. To an outsider, all of the mayhem and killings are frightening, but after repeated exposure, they cause little, if any, effect. There is a psychological base for this which I'd go into if Doug would allow me the space for an article. So, what do we have after the smoke clears? There's nothing special about science or technology, nothing that makes it better than any other human achievement. In most cases, SF doesn't "explore strange, new worlds", it merely provides an escape into a somehow more comfortable, more reassuring world, just like any other type of fiction (or entertainment, for that matter). Don't get me wrong: I'm very fond of science fiction. I can even find enjoyment in the "junk". Where SF is really at its best, though, is where it breaks ground, where it doesn't settle for using the same gimmicks that have been used over and over and over. And that happens when it communicates something that anyone can understand, that relates to people, that doesn't require an "in-group" knowledge to decipher or a fanatic passion for technology and pseudo-science. SF, at its best, is the best. At its worst (most of the time, according to somebody or other's law), it's a displaced "Frankenstein Meets The Wolfman". And you wonder why Ellison is losing (or has lost) respect for fandom? Fandom doesn't make science fiction (I mean good science fiction), writers do. Not "science fiction writers". Writers. But we all knew that anyway, didn't we?

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Thrust 10 is better than good, despite the subtitle I dislike. Asimov's succinct speech slips up on its point, makes it, and stops. I congratulate you on publishing it, and thank you. The word for the interviews, and Sheffield, and White, and Bischoff, is: fascinating. Very different, and clever of you and Dave to interview agents. // In addition to fascinating, the word for both White and Bischoff's writings about writing is engrossing. I love reading writers writing about themselves, their work, and how they started and are continuing. Lou Stathis is interesting too -- and maybe a bit over-intimidated in matters relating to the fact that they are two sexes and each -- usually -- is attracted to the other. (Gee, at least it wasn't megalocarpous lugs, or knockers... Was there a cariophagous guy in there?) // The newsprint is fine, honestly; it's readable and needs little storage space. Your trouble with getting a cover is a shame, and you certainly came out just fine, with this most striking Stoffen. // The letters are fun and provide great humor. Please fight against sliding into the trap of trying real hard to be controversial; there's enough of that in the letters, whence emanates the ear-grating screech of grinding axes. (Yeah, mine too.) With the sort of material you are (incredibly!)

obtaining for *Thrust*, getting a name for being Tough and Controversial is unnecessary. This is a good of fanzine -- and with an issue such as this, I may try to deduct it next 15th April as a professional journal. // I would honestly love to read a real story featuring a 54th Armenian woman who has brains and does things both women and men could believe in. My hero Tiana is about that height though not Armenian, has brains, vanity, and competence -- and I'll be damned if I know whether I believe in the things she does or not. One comes late to social awareness, and one tries.

[I'm certainly glad you like *THRUST*. I'm not trying to make *THRUST* tough and controversial, just interesting. In some cases, being interesting may be controversial, or visa versa. "Controversy", however, means a clash of opposing views, and I have every intention of keeping *THRUST* open to opposing views of every type. // Do deduct *THRUST* from your income tax. I hope to make this magazine an essential part of keeping up with current opinions in the quickly changing field of sf.]

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hairy chested." Nowhere did I so describe Verrons. I have not reread the material for a year or more, but I doubt that I even described Verrons as muscular. It's my inclination not to hedge the reader in with overdrawn physical descriptions of human characters. When I read a book I build my own images of the characters and am annoyed by the imposition of description beyond the very general. So while I intend Wayne Hooks and other readers to build their own detailed images, I don't accept the blame when they proceed on their own to build stereotypes.

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The interviews with the agents were quite good and it's interesting to see their side of the picture. How about interviewing some publishers next and finding out how they relate to science fiction. // But frankly, I'm puzzled by Charles Sheffield's "The Easiest Way To Become A Great SF Writer." It's overlong, for one thing, and at times smacks of sophomorism. I get the feeling this piece was written in a hurry a long time ago... // On the other hand, Derek Carter's "The Visit" was superb: I love it (piano propelled balloons and all!) and hope Derek does similar things in times to come. // "My Column" was very good, Ted White can turn out some really valid material filled with insights into the how and why of writing/editing/publishing. If all his future columns are in this vein you'll really have a vital and necessary magazine for the SF field. // Dave Bischoff and Lou Stathis both wrote outstanding articles this issue. Indeed, I'm going to leave my copy of *THRUST* #10 on my boss' desk turned to Stathis article in the hopes some light will be shed on the subject of science fiction in this studio. // *ahem* There are eleven stories each writer must write, Steve Miller. Your article was #11. // Darrell Schweitzer has a problem, Doug. The man can't see. Oh, he can read books very well but when taken out of the environment he's familiar with, he becomes very defensive. Please don't let Darrell review anymore movies for you. He writes a good literary review but he just isn't attuned to films. // I do agree with him, however, on the car crash from CESK which completely left my mind after seeing the film. It jarred so much with the rest of the film I didn't want to remember it, I guess. // Artwork this issue was very, very nice. Special credit to Dan Staffan for his cover and illo for "My Column". Grant Canfield's running girl on page 29 is truly marvelous. The expression on her face and the style of shading remind me of Barbaraelle as she was before Jean-Claude Forest went off the deep end. // Ah, now we come to the heart of the matter, the letter-col. // First, however, I must take you to point on something. You, Doug, are an editor. An editor is someone who edits. You've done yourself, Harlan, and *THRUST*

THRUST #10 arrived yesterday and it is a very handsome fanzine, especially the cover. //

a great disservice by printing the first half of Harlan's diatribe against Sheffield. // As Harlan stated, the first half of the letter was written in a fury of white heat. He should not have sent it. You should not have published it (A simple disclaimer to the effect that you committed part of the letter in the interest of rationality or some such would have been sufficient). Why? Because it adds fuel to an already inflammable situation. Nothing will be solved by Ellison "giving ammunition" as Sheffield so aptly puts it.

// Also, I'm getting pretty sick and tired of the large number of immediate responses and counter-responses seen in a large number of fanzine recently. Sheffield wrote the first letter. I can't remember if you offered Harlan an opportunity for an immediate response or not -- in any case he didn't take it for one reason or another. Now you let Sheffield have a shot at Harlan without a similar intervening timespan. The result is rather unfair -- why not let Harlan respond to the response, etc? // Granted, in some cases an immediate response will do much to keep level heads, quell rumors, and bring a situation to a rapid demise -- but, Doug, that just ain't the case in Sheffield's reply. He solely attacks Harlan on the tone of Harlan's first part of the letter, not on the cooler part which followed. He also drags up arguments which Ellison himself later described in the context of "silliness." // In short, this exchange has done little to further the argument one way or another and will only provide lots of gossip and snide comments. I've told my wife not to touch the next issue of *THRUST* unless she's wearing lead gloves -- Harlan's response to this bit of nonsense (assuming he doesn't say to hell with it and ignore it) will be too hot to handle. // The rest of the column was very nice and enjoyable. Andrew J. Offutt's letter (see, I can spell his name out fully, too) was interesting, reminding me of a piece John Brunner once wrote on "meddling morons" (copy editors). Jessica Amanda Salmonson's letter was quite funny while Mike Glucksohn seems right on target. // Alan R. Bechtold's letter gave me the willies. Are we sure Cosmic Claude Degler is really dead?

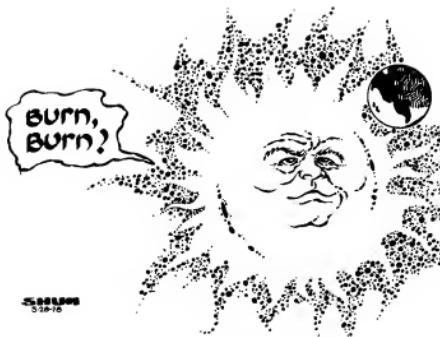
[I stand behind my printing of all of Harlan's letter. Harlan felt strongly, and reacted strongly, and I don't see any reason why the fact should be hidden. As for responses, a member of the staff will always have the last word, if they want it. That's my policy, and it's the policy of most other magazines. You can't keep your staff writers happy if you don't let them have the last word.]

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Good issue. I'm much taken by Bischoff's passionate credo and Sheffield's cool reasoning. Morrison is probably right that I could have broken out of the sf ghetto a few years back with a big novel, but when I proposed it to a publisher (in 1969) I got nowhere and by the time publishers were proposing it to me (in 1973) I was losing interest in writing altogether. As for Harlan and his wish not to have his work labeled sf, I feel some sympathy but I think this is basically a commercial rather than an ideological decision; certainly a science fiction writer is what he sets out to be circa 1954, and much of what he wrote is sf by anybody's definition. "SF" may be a false karass, but there's a real karass wandering around inside it, and Harlan's a member. (As is Vonnegut.)

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Yes, *THRUST* is becoming one of the best "little" or "semi-pro" publications in the field/genre/ghetto/quag/whatever. // The Kirby McCauley interview was well-done, and my only cavil was its length -- could have been/should have been much longer. But I fear the problem lay more with Kirby -- a quiet, socially reserved, almost shy man, not given to prolix -- than Dave Bischoff's interviewing abilities. I think this piece is the first spotlight on one of publishing's most integral parts -- the literary agent...more specifically, the agent who loves his work and the material that he represents, and Kirby certainly typifies that kind of agent. I have been one of his clients since 1974 when he came to



SHARON
52-16

NYC, and he has proved time and again to be a reliable, genuine, ethical person. He has also become a good friend, counselor, and confessor -- something that must develop if a writer and his agent are going to trust each other. // Sheffield's piece was well-written, clever, and obviously well-thought out. Charles shows himself to be a very clear-headed chap both in person and on paper. I have personal dislike, however with articles that attempt categorization and labeling when trying to come on with the "how-to" piece of hype. A very subjective thing, no doubt, but it lies somewhere within. I don't think any of us write "in-category" on a high percentage basis, and I feel that while Charles' mention of specific writers for his specific categories was meant to be flattering (or at least neutral), the effect was, to me, like trying to force someone into a strait-jacket, i.e. not very complimentary. // David Bischoff is a good friend of mine and I have trouble assaying the objective worth of material written by good friends. However, I cannot restrain myself from saying that his column continues to grow in warmth, personality, and insight. He shows maturity and an evolution that is rarely seen in (arggh!, I loathe to use the term) "fan-writing." The only problem with writing such excellent stuff is that you give yourself a hard act to follow. I know from experience that it's tough to keep coming up with sparkling ideas to essay upon. Good luck to you, Lad. I have faith in you. // On Ted White: ah me, ... another good friend, albeit one who I don't see much of anymore. Again, it's tough for me to comment with much objectivity...especially when Ted is writing about stuff I have heard from him in various fragments of conversation over the years. I found Moorcock's remark about Ted being a boor, like the voice of the last guy in bar at closing time, to be incredibly cruel. It is so easy to bad-mouth people, I'm surprised that we are not taxed for it. Moorcock can be tedious and pretentious and who really gives a shit? There is room for all of us as long as we don't let our egos get in the way. What I like about Ted's column is the universal feelings of novice writers that he touched upon, the feelings that are felt when you are alone with your typewriter and the blank piece of paper. If you are a writer, or if you have ever attempted to write seriously, you can't read Ted's most recent column and be bored. // Stathis was right on target with his piece on SF publishing: a good balance of personal feelings and factual reporting. New Journalism comes to THRUST, maybe? Steve Miller was clever and droll and all that shit, but I found his piece insubstantial and less-than-informative. A tossoff that required little insight or cerebration. I know he can do better than that. // One of the most entertaining aspects of No. 10 had to be the letter column! Such pyrotechnics and shit-slinging I have rarely seen in one column...Of course, Uncle Harlan's letter was priceless (you should have paid him for it), but Lynn Bush and Werewoman Salmonson's letters were also worth the entire price of a subscription. I was a bit surprised to see in

Dave Bischoff's reply to Glicksohn his reference to my KNIGHTS column as a "heavy handed assault, backstabbing, and 'blackballing' of fandom". Christ, David, was it that bad? I thought I was being reasonably polite. // The reviews were also of a high order -- especially when the reviewer thinks that my last novel, *The Time-Swept City*, is an "excellent and ambitious" novel. Thank you, sir, I shall try to continue to entertain you in like fashion. That book has done well for me, and I have already sold foreign rights to four different countries. May Gregg Press reprint it!

[In my years of association with Ted White, I have never found him to be boorish. I sometimes think Ted must be the victim of a slander campaign caused by people and events of a time before I met him (circa 1970). I find all the evidence pointing towards Ted's being a very sensitive individual. Unfortunately somewhere between typesetting and layout, my reply to Michael Moorcock's letter last issue was lost.]

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Excellent issue, your best. Sheffield's analysis of writer types is original and insightful. I don't know where I fit

but I can, er, clearly recognize most of my colleagues in Sheffield's 7 types. But he leaves no room for someone like Clarke to be a philosopher, too. I see a clear lineage (of ideas) from Stapledon to Clarke to Lem -- philosophical, cosmic of -- that I'd like to one day join. They mix the Worldmaker, the Importer and the Sensitive -- though not enough Sensitive to make them very successful as artists, to my mind. In the long run I think they may be the most important current in sf, and they're also the rarest type. When they're at their best, they're Seers, too. And they'll hold up far better than the most transient types, the Band-Wagoners. And finally, to complete the circle: how does Sheffield classify himself? This would tell us something useful about his 7 types, too...

[Charles classifies himself as an Importer, of course. Why would he have written an article about the easiest way to become an sf writer if he hadn't followed his own advise?] //

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First things first -- Dan Stefan's role in life is clear. He should pull a bundle designing playing cards. //

Haran Ellison's thing was the most enjoyable bit in the issue. He is a verbal contortionist, and it is impossible not to admire his wordy gymnastics. One consumes his writing with appreciative gusto, it is no less than hilarious. Charles Sheffield's error was in trying to refute such a piece. These things cannot be rebutted, they are like rice-soup, all flavor and no nourishment. Logic is not applicable because there is nothing to which logic can be applied. But I differ from Sheffield on one small point. Ellison's "dungfuck" is not in the least clever, and Ellison could have done better with a moment's thought. Sheffield should learn that a spoonful of sweet reasonableness is sugar and rosewater -- more efficacious in such matters, because it astonishes such as Ellison. // Sheffield's manner of allocating SF&F writers to various compartments was an interesting piece of thinking. I admire anyone who admires Kipling, the more so if that one also knows the "vicar of Bray". As Sheffield rightly outpoints an author may reside in more than one camp. Perhaps I am very wrong in this but I believe that the category of interpolators -- conscious or otherwise -- is quite large. Here the author starts with a story (perhaps mainstream) and deftly inserts bits and pieces of science (extrapolated by preference) -- the six-gun becomes a laser-gun, ornery injuns are replaced by horrendibulous BEMS, and so ad nauseam. Here the desert may become a swamp and the faithful cause exchanged for an espion, web-footed thing of the ostrich type. Of course Sheffield may wish to absorb the interpolators into others of his compartments. // In another vein, a word of praise for Sheffield's "Treasure of Odirex", and "English detective mystery", with Erasmus Darwin as the amateur sleuth, which appeared in July FANTASTIC. // Anent Lou Stathis' essay on

practicalities, which I fervently support, I offer the possibility that at least 99.5% of "science" contained in SF&F stories is wretched nonsense. And I suggest that the people who write of wanderers through the galaxies could not so much as write the Newtonian equations for a two-body problem. Indeed, they could not even understand it if it were presented in bold-face type. Here is an example of slightly greater depth: We all agree that time slows down in a strong gravitational field. Now speed (or velocity) is rate of change with respect to time, and thus we have the rate of change of time with respect to time. But $dt/dt = 1$ and therefore cannot be negative and so time cannot slow down ever. A most ingenious paradox.

{There's something basically wrong here, but since it's out of my field (chemistry) I'll let the physicists in the readership figure this out.)

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Well, I'm certainly pleased that you are bowing to my wisdom and making a regular thing of your short, nasty book reviews. When do you start. Not with #10 -- out of about 21 books you reviewed, you got close to nasty only about 1.5 times. I think it's unfortunate that you've been reading books you've enjoyed lately -- it's warping your perspective. // It's easy for Ellison to talk about sleeping in a tent in the dessert. He's supposed to be tough. Not me, I want a lock on my door to keep all the crazies out when I sleep. And the spiders and snakes and... // But I don't think NOW supports the idea of backing out of a convention after contracts have been signed and commitments have been made. I think those who plan to go might as well go and do whatever they planned to do anyway, and if Harlan or anyone else wants to use their speaking time to push ERA, they have a right to do so, just as Haldeman has a right to use his Goh speech as a platform for L-5 and Heinlein has a right to make a fool of himself talking about how nice another nuclear war will be. I do feel that if you don't plan to go, you might as well send the chamber of commerce out there a note claiming that you refuse to go to a state that refuses to recognize women as people. I really like the idea of people who weren't going to go to Arizona anyway all writing to them and saying that that is why. Just think, there are so many folks who aren't going to Arizona this year. // Fortunately, both Massachusetts and Maryland have ratified, so that won't be a consideration for the next east coast con. However, Massachusetts has voted to call a constitutional convention (to make all abortion illegal), and they voted down a motion to exclude the Bill of Rights from any fooling around. So they aren't just interested in outlawing abortion again. So, if people are really interested in making their judgements based on political considerations, I suppose that would be as good a basis as any, although I have no particular faith that the alleged Baltimore Convention Center which BFHA is bidding will actually exist in 1980. Sigh. // Frankly, I hardly consider a person who wrote you such a viciously anti-faggot letter (with all that stuff about you all buggering each other) as Jessica's in last issue to be qualified to write an article about sexism. I was deeply offended by the blatant heterosexism of that letter, and would rather not see its author quoted as an authority on feminism. // Lou Stathis may have a point (after all, he should know), but if not thinking "each and every premise out to its logical endpoint" qualified one as a mediocre neo-writer, there are a hell of a lot of those selling novels, and that looks like reason enough for people in that category to keep submitting, and expecting to sell, such stories. // I really wish Sheffield had left that "Harlie is sixteen" crack out. Just beside the silly age-chauvinism of it, I think it's about time we realized that the supposedly "immature" manner Ellison has of venting his anger -- laying it all out in public, out front, where everyone can hear exactly what he thinks -- is no worse than the "mature" method which "adult" restraint demands; quietly going about behind someone's back, unemotionally implying that one's victim is not quite all right, and slowly, politely, without ever bringing the real complaints one has to the surface, eroding that person's public image. I think the subjects of your

interviews, earlier in the issue, make plain enough just what very good motivation Ellison may have for refusing to let his books be labeled as SF (especially when mentioning Vonnegut). Sure, his mention of Effinger seems a bit poorly placed, and Sheffield makes a couple of good points. Nevertheless, I don't think I can take much more of his pontificating on the subject, and I know I don't want to hear any more cheap shots about Harlan's alleged immaturity. He's not the only one who is guilty, but since he is the most recent, he's getting my venom at the moment. Grown-ups have temper tantrums too, but they are usually more dangerous than kids who have them. Personally, I think Harlan is to be congratulated for not doing it the sneaky, underhanded way that most "mature adults" do -- because they're too cowardly to come out front with it. At least he's not dull, which puts him a good ways above the rest.

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I think I found Lou Stathis' article the most interesting. I found myself comparing experiences with him, and was surprised to note how little our respective slushpile woes overlap. I think the reason for this is simply that he's reading novels and I'm reading short fiction, and the amateur incompetents working in this field are of two different sorts. The rankest of the rank, with no storytelling ability and the misconception that merely stating an idea is enough, usually are restrained to under a dozen pages. I doubt Lou sees many non-stories, non-functional word patterns, verbal doodles, Tomato Surprises (a story in which it is revealed in the last line that the planet is Earth, or the hero is a giant asparagus when we thought he was human), or synopses. Even in the bad old days, when Hugo Gernsback was firmly opposed to story values, it was difficult to write a novel which was not a story. Something has to happen in all those words! But I can imagine how tedious the basically competent but bland story, which has to be read in some detail to see if it has possibilities, can be in novel length. You do have to read things like that and actively seek new authors, or else you don't fill pages. ASIMOV's SF at the moment has no real problem in getting good stories, and we actually have a slightly over-full backlog, but aside from a novella each from Hal Clement and Jack Williamson (both from the forthcoming book *Medes*: Harlan's World), virtually all these pieces are from unknown writers. First sales easily make up 30%, and then there are other new writers coming back for later sales. We've bought something like 4 from Barry Longyear, who is as prolific as Ruttner. I don't imagine Dell buys more first novels than any other sort, but it is necessary to be careful about something which is promising. What surprises me is that Lou reports cliché I have never seen, like the reversed lung business, and doesn't mention ones so common ASIMOV's has printed cards to deal with them. Reworks of historical events (usually the Lincoln or Kennedy assassinations) "explained" by extraterrestrial or other science fictional influences. *Genesis* 1:1. I'm also pushing for a UFO card, since it seems close to half of the totally hopeless stories are either imitation Close Encounters or show perpetually inept taste in selecting Earthmen to visit. The contactees more often than not are stereotyped Appalachian hillbillies. My favorite scientific blooper is the one about the war between planets over hydrogen. One planet had a monopoly on the hydrogen mines and wouldn't let anyone else have any. I also have a perverse fondness for the one about the guy who was taken aboard a typical UFO and the usual things happened, but then he fell off the couch and realized he'd fallen asleep and it was all a dream!!! Another basic cliché is *The Day They Outlawed It's babies*. // On the same subject, Steve Miller's article isn't very convincing. Aside from #4, *Genesis* 1:1, most of those basic stories one allegedly must get out of one's system are legitimate subject matter and can be turned into publishable fiction. #5 includes all utopias and dystopias. #6 is a basic Harlan Ellison plot. #9 is the plot of *Sinister Barrier*. #10 doesn't work that well in science fiction, but is one of the essential themes of traditional fantasy. I have sold so many versions of it (including, lately a novel) that I really must stop before I get in a rut. The Misfit story

is also basic SF, the plot of *Slan* and countless others. The First Fuck isn't inherently science fiction. I Will Live Forever, also known as the immortality story, the subject of the Jack Dann anthology you reviewed this issue, is also a longtime favorite. I have sold these too. I might also mention the supernatural variations, deals with the devil, vampires, immortality through godhood, etc. Any story can be reduced to trivia if the treatment is banal enough, about the same idea can still be valid. It's dangerous to list anything writers should not write, because as soon as you do someone will do a classic version of it. Even *UFO's* or *Genesis 1:1* (Harlan's "The Voice In The Garden," Asimov's "The Last Question") or famous assassinations. (Bradbury's "Downwind From Gettysburg.") BEING SENSITIVE isn't really a story, but an invitation to be pretentious, which is something to be avoided. I can't help but feel Delany fell into this trap to the tune of 800+ pages with *Dhalgren*. I guess if we are to proscribe anything, it would be basic dumb ideas, of which there are no classic versions. There is a vast difference between a good idea (*The War of The Worlds*) being reduced to cliche and the idea which was never valid to start with. The exclusively male or female society is so contrary to human nature and experience that contrary to "Houston, Houston, etc." *Amazon Planet* (Reynolds), and *Spartan Planet* (Chandler), I think it needs to be labeled a Dumb Idea. I have yet to see a convincing version of it. The Tomato Surprise, mentioned earlier (Gee! It's really Earth) is a reader blindfold and not a story, thus not valid. Also the old bit about the disguised aliens who take off their human suits and start eating the Earthpeople. But even here, as I've said, a writer of sufficient ability can do something with the material. Maybe someday a genius will produce the ultimate Tomato Surprise. I suppose the one story which virtually every new writer does eventually produce is Argh! The Oppressive Future Society Is Destroying Me! The first thing I ever wrote was one of these. But this too is a valid theme in the hands of someone of ability. // Ted White's column shows how different some writers can be in working habits. What surprises me most is the statement that it took him ten years to learn how to compose at the typewriter. Sure, H. Lovecraft had this problem but that was a long time ago, and he detested all things mechanical anyway, but it had never occurred to me that anyone would still have the problem. I learned to type out of necessity when I started writing, at age 14, and the ability to compose at the typewriter came immediately. If anything my handwriting atrophied, because typing was so much faster. The only thing I've ever composed longhand is my (alleged) poetry, where there are only a few carefully considered words involved. Otherwise my normal method is, after much mental preparation, to the point of mentally composing and rephrasing key parts, typing a sloppy, single-spaced first draft, making notes and corrections, and typing a double-spaced final draft which becomes the submission copy. (Thus the word count is written in by hand afterwards, because I'm not sure of the exact wordage until I'm finished. Sometimes sections are added or deleted in the final version.) // Dave Bischoff's article shows him to be the Great Fannish Archetype of Our Time. Maybe we should have him bronzed and used as a doorknob in Plato's Cave... // My, my, how Harlan does rant and rave. He is growing old gracelessly, it seems. Back in 1969, when he was in the middle of another wave of Resignation after the St. Louiscon Incident, there were the usual open letters and the like, and I don't recall any outbursts like this one. Actually, I'd find it flattering if I were to resign from anything and people were to think me important enough to ask me to stay around. But, as I said, this is just a change of labels. There's no indication Harlan will not continue to write the same sort of stories for the same sort of markets. By going into higher paying slicks he's doing what Ray Bradbury did many years back, and as long as Bradbury continued to write, I don't think there were too many outcries. I doubt many SF readers failed to notice the recent *Long After Midnight* because most of the stories were not published in science fiction magazines. // Actually, the only such "resignation" of this type which strikes me as foolish is that of Thomas Disch, who seems to be more interested in appearing in little literaries these days. He's traded off a moderately large audience for a minuscule one.

// A last thought on *Star Wars*. I suspect that for all its stupidities, *Star Wars* is going to survive for a long time. Perhaps because of its stupidities. SW will be the camp of the 1990's, the same way *King Kong*, essentially silly movie with one-dimensional characters, is today. The interesting character in that was the ape. SW has its robots. Not to be confused with science fiction, though, any more than *Kong* was to be confused with Don A. Stuart or Stanley Weinbaum.

[I too learned to type at 14, picked it up right away, and haven't written without it since. Until then, however, I had never really written much, thus never really learning to compose with a pencil, and I think that was the major factor. I now find I'm addicted, in that I have a hard time expressing myself when not looking at a typewriter keyboard. I had to make them get me a typewriter at work to compose technical reports. I do not, however, probably because I picked it up so easily, type well. I never bothered to take a course in typing, because I was doing it already.]

IT OCCURED TO ME
LATELY THAT NOTHING
HAS OCCURED TO
ME LATELY?



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I thought Moorcock's comparison of SFWA Forum to *Pravda* was hilariously appropriate. I was a member for awhile, but didn't bother to resign; I let my membership run out. I'm not sure they noticed. In the time I was a member of SFWA I got one Bulletin and one Forum and a Nebula ballot. After that they forgot about me, and didn't answer my letters. And didn't print my letters in Forum, from what I've been able to find out. The main reason I joined was to get an SFWA directory, which was never sent me. I've been meaning to get around to joining the Writer's Guild, which Michael Kurland recommended to me a couple of years back. It requires only that one have sold an entire book of some sort, they don't care whether it's SF or what. He claims that it's a tough, demanding, action-conscious organization, and very up-to-date. Everything SFWA isn't. Still, I wonder if they could appreciate the special problems of the SF publishing field... and how well would they communicate with us, generally? Possibly, then, there's a need for a SFWA. I said a SFWA. Not the one we have. I have no hope of reforming it. // But suppose we rounded up all the people who've resigned from SFWA -- it seems there are

more all the time, it's a real fad -- and all the people who are disillusioned with it but didn't bother to resign and all the people who never bothered to join because it's a joke anyway . . . and we formed with these people, an alternative SF writer's guild. Something rapidly active. And to hell with awards. // Surely, other people have suggested this at one time or another. Probably no one had the initiative Damon Knight had way back when. I don't want to do it alone -- but with a core of dedicated organizers, I'd be willing to lend whatever energy I have to the project, if anyone's interested. We could form a committee of the disillusioned, everyone of equal influence. The object, as I see it, would be to improve, as radically as possible, contracts and other conditions for SF and fantasy writers. We're supposed to be such an imaginative bunch, but we've let the publishing industry stonewall us on a great many things -- we ought to pool our imaginations and our determination to come up with a tough means with which to improve our push, our hand in publishing's endless legal poker. // Anyone game?

[Word has it that SFWA is doing something these days about contracts and things, with the Pocket Books contract controversy being the most recent and notable action. Joe Haldeman and Marta Randall, among others, have been quite active in that one. The main problem I see is man-power. What writer wants to spend half of his time working hard not writing? It seems to me that the agents are the ones who should be handling most of this kind of thing. That's what they're paid for.]

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story types that all writers must write, like the 'And then I went back through time and killed my grandfather.' // Actually, some pretty good stories could fit into his definitions as well, probably because most of them deal with issues that are eternal questions, things which will always be written about in literature because they're the kind of questions that people will always wonder about and enjoy writing and reading. Take for example the following:
1. Misfit story: DYING INSIDE by Silverberg 1. I will live forever: TO LIVE FOREVER by Vance 3. I'll show them: LATHE OF HEAVEN by Gruen 4. Draculastine: A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ by Miller 5. Being Sensitive: "Painwise" by Tiptree 6. We are all property: SIMULACRON THREE by Galouye 7. Death: "Born with the Dead" by Silverberg 8. There will be a better world: RING AROUND THE SUN by Simak 9. First Fuck: DAVY by Pangborn 10. Adam and Eve: Well, I suppose there really hasn't been a good one of these since The Old Testament. // Ellison vs. Sheffield. This is usually a subject I avoid, because it's like peeing into the wind, but although I think Ellison overstates his case a bit, Sheffield just doesn't think through the implications of what he is saying. 1) Ellison is defining sf in the way that the non-fannish reading public defines sf. He rejects that label because it leads to mainstream novels being blurbed "by noted SF author." This is a perfectly legitimate objection. Ellison is a writer, who writes Fantasy and SF among other things, but he is no longer really a genre writer. More power to him, I say. I like good fiction; I really don't care what category it happens to fit. 2) SF is a ghetto. It is in many ways a self-imposed ghetto, but it is a ghetto nonetheless. 3) Ellison overstates his case in talking about the low quality of SF. What he says about SF is absolutely true. It is also true of mainstream fiction, of mystery fiction, of any genre. 90% of everything is crud. 4) It certainly should matter that Ellison's books are covered with spaceships. He may have sold two million copies anyway, but without the spaceships, they might have sold four million. 5) Awards help sales. SF writing is a profession, or part of a profession, not a holy calling. Anything that increases a writer's income is welcome, and it doesn't detract one bit from his argument against classification that he accepts Hugos and Nebulas. They help sell his books, and he can legitimately appeal for sales to any sub-group. 6) Fans, organized fans, have little effect on what gets bought. It is the unorganized casual fans who

decide, because they go out and buy the books. Unfortunately, they buy an awful lot of Lin Carter, John Norman, Robert Howard, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. //) Sheffield's claim that Ellison could not sell to PENTHOUSE and the other slick magazines without his big name is ridiculous. According to Ellison index in F&SF, he has had dozens of stories published there under pseudonyms. Sheffield is talking through his hat in this case, trying to defend a position he talked himself into.

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I just got around to reading THRUST 10 today (having been away for a couple of months), but it's a good issue. I do hope that you get Jessica Salmonson to write a column on sexism in sf; she's right about the lack of women writing for you, and she'd likely have some good things to say. // Meanwhile, though I don't intend to write sf someday, and though I often love that writing which Darrell Schweitzer thinks so terribly academic (but then I like contemporary poetry too, as does Delany, and a lot of people, most of them non-sf fans, did finish and truly enjoy DHALGREEN, as I did), the series of articles, interviews, etc. on writing of sf were interesting, even if they only tended to emphasize some of the debilitating aspects of the scene. Of well, my problem is that I often find the more experimental writing more wholly entertaining than just stories well told. But there's no doubt that such stories continue to fulfill certain needs we all have. It's simply that that kind of story-telling often occurs at its best in films today, and the best writers turn away from simply doing that to capturing their readers through the music of their styles. A Canadian poet and prose writer, George Bowering, enjoys reading 'dead' forms for relaxation -- sf, thrillers, etc. -- but he feels the real writing breaks out of those forms. He once suggested that 'narrative is what happens when you turn the page.' Of course, there still has to be something there which compels our attention -- can it good writing, style, a voice. Well I do go on. The thing is that someone like Ellison is right to say he owes no one but himself the stories he chooses to write. On the other hand, he's going to continue to be perceived as an sf writer for a long time no matter what he says, and I don't see why he doesn't just accept that horrible fate and keep writing what he wants to write. As he says, he knows how to sell and he reaches a large audience, so he isn't being hurt, as far as I can see, by the label occasionally stuck on his books. Isaac Asimov is truly interesting in his talk: and the only problem it seems is getting big business (the oil cartels) and government to truly support the building of solar energy orbiting stations. I don't see it happening, though the scientists tell us it's possible with the state of the art as it is right now. // Lou Stathis is both completely right and just a wee bit too narrow in his call for good stories. Yeah, we need human relations, and we need writers who can work with believable characters, but how they finally do that is often difficult to analyse. I think Joanna Russ creates incredibly 'real' character interactions in her stories, yet she does it all by indirection, often creating psychological tension by the vast amount of explanation she leaves out rather than anything else; such skill and craft can only come with a lot of work and possibly an inborn understanding and gift. // The last thing we need, as you realize, is Alan Bechtold's Science Fiction Chamber of Commerce. Besides when they can't even stay together in SFWA (I mean, to me, Michael Moorcock is one of the best writers around and he doesn't like them, and many of them don't like him and many of your readers will disagree with my evaluation of him, etc. ad nauseam), how will any, even the smallest group of sf writers, if not academics, tend to agree that Damon Knight was right when he defined sf as what we mean when we point to it, and he might have said that's how we define sf writers too. // OK, I'm worried about what will happen to sf films too, but missing the point about CLOSE ENCOUNTERS isn't going to help anyone. It's not a great film either, but it's also more religious than sf, and insofar as it works, works on that basis -- he who believes like a child shall be saved, and by *** he is, allowed aboard the 'mother' ship and taken to Nirvana, in the end. Frankly,

although it's not so hot on special effects, DARK STAR is the best of film in years. Of course. Peace.

Jessica Amanda Salmonson Honest to correctness, this Box 5688 University Station is a more interesting issue Seattle, Washington 98105 than the first I saw. I

started reading the interview with Kirby thinking I probably wouldn't be able to finish it, couldn't imagine why an interview with an agent would be interesting -- but it was. And since most interviews really are boring no matter who they're with, this is a fair accomplishment. I never gave much thought about the doings of New York agents, and this and the conversation with Morrison were entertaining and informative; I also think Morrison clarified for me the logistical explanation for so many sf writers declaring sf a literary ghetto. I figured it was just tickle unfaithfulness and dullness on those writers' parts, to put down what made them successes -- but obviously there's a basis for considering sf a ghetto, and like with other ghettos, its a class and economic difference. On Kirby again, he comes across as a tactful, caring individual and I would venture that one reason for his fast rise in his profession is bound up in those two character traits. // Graphically, I fear the zine is still weak. The exception is Derek's pictorial, very amusing, attractive. The remaining art, however, is either very common or simply poor. The Matt Howarth fillo was interesting at least: man on hill with gun, woman in valley with flower. What makes this interesting is the strong likelihood that the artist didn't recognize his own symbols. // It's too bad you lost Lynn Bush's address -- I'd like to put her on my mailing list. She knows what she's talking about!

Alexander Yudenitsch I feel that you have something Caixa Postal 9613 good going, and I'll paraphrase 01000 - São Paulo, SP Ted White in (His) Column, to the Brasil effect that "the very fact that everything is not highly polished says something in (THRUST's) favor -- and it leaves room for growth and development in issues to come". // I think these rough edges are what make THRUST a live, vibrant zine: you can find things to disagree with, and others that you just want to praise or side with. // For example, I must admit to a certain prejudice against Norman Spinrad before (most of it, I'll confess, entirely gratuitous), but his "Why I am not announcing that I am leaving SF" was very level-headed and knowledgeable: he seems to understand the true situation better than do Silverberg and Malzberg (or even Ellison), and I find his view much more congenial than Dave Bischoff's in "Us and them" (Which is really about the same theme: What is SF in the Real World?) Ted White seems to fall somewhere in-between, since he seems to hold to ideas presented by Dave as an example of what's wrong, but doesn't reach Norman's olympic view of the field, and our place in it. // You also have a healthy variety of themes, approaches, viewpoints, and so on, among your contributors. I'd prefer less book reviews and more letters, but you already seem to be printing all you get, so probably that's a useless comment... // The interviews you do are of the kind I like: interactive. They don't read as the interviewee's answers to a pre-submitted list of questions, but as a record of a real, live, conversation. // That's the second time I've used the word "live" to describe THRUST; and I think that sums it up: THRUST is alive (and I hope it does well!)

Alan R. Bechtold Congratulations on the very fine P.O. Box 1821 issue that was THRUST #10! You Topeka, Kansas 66001 out did McGarry's EMPIRE with this special issue on the writing of SF. I'll just bet Mark's glad you don't cover the topic with every issue. // The best pieces were those by Sheffield, White and Miller. I may well place the list of "writer-types" that Sheffield presented, directly alongside the "Ten Stories" list presented by Miller, on my office wall, just to keep them both constantly in mind. And Ted presented THE

ANSWER to the creativity-curbed person. I firmly agree that no one is uncreative by nature, just convinced. // The Kirby McCauley interview was a piece with a lot of potential, but I didn't feel that enough of the right questions were asked. It appeared to me that Mr. McCauley was treated too much as a personality in his own right (and I don't doubt for a minute that he is), and not enough as an industry "insider" with tips on the workings of the publishing world and how best to break into it. // I haven't yet figured out whether you made fun of my last LOC, or picked up on my satirization of myself, but the point I was making really concerned attitude. I think we should all be looking for ways to further the field of SF rather than trying purposefully to keep each other in the "science fiction ghetto," as Harlan accuses. My love of SF goes far beyond any feeling of exclusiveness I could possibly get out of being a fan. // Did you notice Harlan's letter is SFR #25? Surprisingly, he answered the one question Mr. Sheffield asked in his rebuttal that has been burning at my mind for so long. Accepting all those SF awards for his admittedly "non-SF" writing was simply a way to raise the price he's paid for his work, as it happens most awards seem to. A simple, but honest, sell-out. Fessing up to that fact in public restored my respect for the man, I must admit... like him or not. I still feel that his reply to Mr. Sheffield's open letter in THRUST #9 was much too harsh. I asked for what I got from him in SFR #23, but Charles' most carefully-worded plea for reason did not deserve the angered tirade it received. // Lynn Bush makes a good argument. Any demand for equal time is always fair and the publication of nudes is no exception. You could argue, however, that for every female nude you've published, there's been a clothed one somewhere as well. Either way, I was most happy to note that in THRUST #10 the only porno you printed was that written by Mr. Ellison and Ms. Salmonson.

[WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Tom Perry, Craig Ledbetter, J. Owen Hanner, Gene Wolfe, Jack Dann, Philip Jose Farmer, Dick Lupoff, Dave Drake, Steven Spruill, Mike Bishop, Louis Morra, and Robert Bloch. Thank you all.]



Please send all letters of comment on this issue to THRUST PUBLICATIONS, Box 746, Adelphi, MD 20783. All letters chosen for publication, in part or in full, will earn its author one free issue of THRUST. Non-subscribers will receive the issue printing the letter, and subscribers will have one issue added to their subscription.

REVIEWS

BOOKS, ETC.



A DIFFERENT LIGHT by Elizabeth Lynn, (Berkley, 1978, \$1.75)

You'll see other reviews pretty soon, and a lot of them will try to make comparisons. The easiest way to review a book is to find another one like it that everyone is familiar with. Then you simply say: "It looks like that thing over there." -- it eliminates a lot of hard work.

Elizabeth Lynn's reviewers are going to say: "She writes like a combination of pre-Dhalgren Delany and middle Tiptree, with a predominant strain of..." And I'll bet you a Hugo that not one of them can finish that sentence.

Lynn is a Campbell award nominee this year, and I'm afraid she timed her novel wrong. All I can remember that I've read before are two lovely little pieces of Haiku-SF in *Chrysalis* that stood right up next to the superb *Sturgeon* story, and one other somewhere else. Nobody in Phoenix will know who she is. But it doesn't really matter. What does matter is that we have a new voice, and one vibrant with perceptual power.

Oddly enough, the blurb on the back of the paperback is accurate in its impression of the over-all mood of the book, if skimpy in content:

Jimson had twenty years to live. Or just one.

Twenty years if he stayed in space-normal, where his disease could be treated. One year if he followed the Starcaptain into the Hype -- the "not-space" that was the only way to the stars, where jeweled voyagers sailed the light-centuries in color-shifting ships; humankind's outriders, star-burned lovers to a Universe heavy with suns..

This is the story of that year.

But that doesn't tell you how incredibly real the characters are, to the point where what would show up as

an inconsistency or a false note in anyone else's work becomes here merely something you couldn't quite understand about a person you know. For instance, after reading about a too-casual reunion between two lovers separated by fourteen years, I don't find myself wondering what the writer was trying to prove. I wonder instead what is it about Russell and Jimson that makes them act that way.

The blurb also doesn't tell you about the rapid flow of events, an unceasing stream of a plot with a small explosion of carefully timed revelation every twenty pages that is at first unexpected, then obvious and inevitable. You will have to put the book down every other chapter to catch your breath. Alfred Bester: you had better get up off of your laurels.

The blurb doesn't give a hint that, for all the galaxy-spanning action complete with aliens, lost colonies, psionics, Holy Relics, temples, pirates, a quest, magic technology, and bar-fights -- the book is the story of a flamboyant love affair from its rekindling after a long absence, through many strong tests, to its powerful resolution, and a final note of hope and maturity.

It doesn't even mention that one of the central characters, Jimson, is an artist and a famous one, and that his heightened perceptions color the entire book into different spectrums. Lynn must be very familiar with the Artist in the abstract. There are no false modulations, everything is on key. At no point did I drop out of Jimson's character to consider that this was a writer trying to tell me how an artist thinks.

The blurb says nothing about Lynn's astonishing transitions, where a chapter will end on a planet, and pick up on the next page in a bar on another planet, four months later, without any sense of disorientation.

Nor anything about her stripped-down prose, grudging with its adjectives, that describes things in the most economical way, and still leaves lushly diffuse impressions that approach poetry: "Felicia was a pale girl with hair cropped to her skull, and muscles like wire moving under her thin shirt." -- or -- "The next Mask was a dragon's head, carved out of purplish-red stone. The long snout, flaring nostrils, scales, and fangs were vividly graven -- they seemed to move on the wall. The darkness soaked up light as a sponge soaks up water, but the red dragon glowed with its own light. Iridescent eyes regarded Jimson with inhuman curiosity." -- or this quiet statement of a different way of looking at things that is so obvious that it's no wonder no SF writer has thought of it before. An image from which Lynn drew her title and central metaphor for the book. A response after contemplation of a Rembrandt on display on a planet other than Earth: "DeVala, beside him, said: "It's strange to think that Rembrandt painted on a planet and under light that neither one of us has ever seen."

And finally, the blurb says not a word about the sexuality of the book, which I found to be a haunting picture of a society where there are no longer any taboos against homosexuality, or any other variety of mutually-enjoyed sex. Relationships form and dissolve in several degrees of seriousness without a thought of gender. People in this book don't react to one another because of sex, but because of who they are. A way of thinking that could have become dry and cerebral in other hands, but Lynn's characters are intensely sexual, and treat sex as natural and common-place. A way of thinking that could have come across as polemical and deliberately taboo-smashing, except that the characters are such real people that their sex lives are intensely personal. I could have quibbled with the fact that most of the relationships here are gay (seems unbalanced), but they are handled with such consummate tact, and they flow so inevitably from the personalities meshing, that it didn't occur to me until now.

The book does have its faults. Some of the scenes and background are distractingly melodramatic. Is it really necessary that Russell be a pirate wanted in twenty systems? Wouldn't he work just as well as a normal out-of-work Starcaptain, perhaps one fallen on hard luck, having lost his ship? Especially as Russell's piratic activities play no role in the book except as a rationale for getting them to 82 Eridani. Do we really have to have gigantic colonizing ships taking people to the Magellanic

Clouds, or to Andromeda? Aren't the umpteen-billion stars in our galaxy enough to worry about, especially when we are given the impression that humanity has only settled about twenty or thirty worlds? Also, there are a lot of anachronistic idioms ("...tell his ass from a hole in the ground.") that jar in the context of this very different milieu.

But my cavils are minor. Lynn's lovingly polished prose will wash away any doubts.

--Steve Brown

THE FUTURIANS by Damon Knight (John Day, 1977, \$10.95)

I honestly never thought I'd see the day when a book of fan history was published by a major trade hardcover house, but now with the enormous demand for material about SF, it seems anything is possible.

I don't know how the general audience will take *The Futurians*, but for fandom it is of extraordinary interest. It has features not found in the other major fan histories. Warner's *All Our Yesterdays* is a broad survey, perhaps overly tactful to the point that some of the facts are left out. Moskowitz's *The Immortal Storm* was best summed up by Warner who said, "If read immediately after a history of World War II, it does not seem like an anticlimax." The Moskowitz volume is, quite simply, a joke, sometimes hilarious, sometimes a sad commentary on how some fans of the period saw themselves. But it should be read concurrently with *The Futurians*, because it covers much of the same material, and the contrasts are interesting. Ignore the more obvious differences, such as the fact that Knight is a writer, and the Moskowitz of 1954 wasn't. (As somebody put it, TIS was "translated from the Slobbovian, badly." Moskowitz's tone totally lacks humanity, while Knight's is very human indeed. I suppose this is because Knight is looking back on the antics of his youth after having learned a great deal since, and Moskowitz was too close to his material. In any case, while the facts pretty well agree, Moskowitz gave epic political struggles, while Knight brings things down to scale with a handful of people in their teens and twenties sometimes being creatively weird, sometimes very insecure, and sometimes making complete idiots of themselves.

At one point he states that the average science fiction fan is more intelligent than the general population, if somewhat less mature. He presents a convincing case for the latter half of the argument at least. Cyril Kornbluth comes off as definitely the oddest of a very odd crew -- He didn't brush his teeth so they were green. Frequently drunk, he did such things as smash all the lights in an apartment corridor (which is why the *Futurians* didn't get along well with landlords), and once half seriously suggested a couple of the others come along and help him kill Lowndes. They even looked odd, as a glance at the photos will show. Only one or two might pass for human in a bad light...

More seriously, I'm surprised to read that virtually every *Futurian* had some physical defect from serious disabilities in childhood to simple ugliness. A mild case is Knight himself, the archetypal precocious, skinny kid who looks years younger than he is. For whatever reasons, virtually all the *Futurians* (and it may be true today for virtually all fans, and SF writers) were isolated from their contemporaries, and drew together out of mutual interest and a trace of paranoia. (A Kornbluth drawing featured a big screw, and a Latin slogan meaning "all who are not *Futurians*.") They shared grungy dwellings long before counter-cultural communes were invented. Knight calls the result an "extended family," which it apparently was, with everybody being far more involved in one another's personal lives than fans are today. There are two cases of romantic affairs being broken off on orders from Donald Wollheim, who apparently felt *Futurian* solidarity was more important. And, more surprisingly, most of the members regarded him as such a brother/father figure they wouldn't think of going against him.

The fascination of this book, which the Moskowitz history utterly lacks, is that it gives an idea of what it was like to be a fan in those days, what sort of people became

fans, and professional SF writers, and how they thought, felt and acted. For additional accounts, Knight has interviewed and quoted extensively most of the surviving principals, and these passages are some of the best parts of the book. We find that those who didn't succeed brilliantly (Pohl, Kornbluth, Asimov, etc.) tended to fail utterly, and come to unhappy ends. (Especially Michel.) The result is of lasting historical value. It transcends gossip and fannish trivia, another thing which the Moskowitz book fails to do. Highly recommended.

--Darrell Schweitzer

SOMERSET DREAMS by Kate Wilhelm (Harper & Row, 1978, \$8.95)

Kate Wilhelm has developed into one of sf's most subtle, yet powerful writers, and this collection of stories, although not really her best work, is a softly penetrating volume, and well worth reading.

Each of these eight stories draws the reader so deeply and smoothly into its mood and setting that, if Wilhelm's work here can be said to have one drawback, it's that it never startles. SF readers are used to being startled, and stories so seamless tend to be unsetting. These are soft science fiction stories, in the full sense of the word. If they are based on any science, it is psychology with a touch of sociology. Most make a definite statement or statements about humankind and our society, but always, more is left unsaid than said.

One warning: don't read the forward before the stories -- in fact, if possible, avoid reading the forward altogether. It's by R. Gahan Wright, whose knowledge of the sf field is immediately illustrated by his statement that only three of the stories can be considered science fiction (showing his definition of sf to be "it's got spaceships or aliens or other planets") and that only one story is "hard-core" science fiction (i.e. it's on another planet). If that's not bad enough, he goes on to "analyze" each story, and in the process gives synopses of all the plots.

Read the fiction; ignore the forward.

--Doug Fratz

INHERIT THE STARS by James P. Hogan. (Del Rey, 1978 \$1.50.)

THE GENESIS MACHINE by James P. Hogan. (Del Rey, 1978 \$1.75)

THE GENTLE GIANTS OF GANYMEDE by James P. Hogan. (Del Rey, 1978, \$1.75)

It would be ridiculously easy to shoot Hogan's novels out of the sky, so I'll get that out of the way now.

First, let me sum up the plots of his three books. Bear with me, it won't take long.

Inherit the Stars: Scientists find an anomaly (50,000 year old human corpse in a space suit on the dark side of the Moon) and spend the rest of the book excitedly discussing various theories with each other until (after a few convenient further discoveries and a lot of deduction) they finally figure it all out.

The Genesis Machine: The most heavily plotted Hogan novel. Scientists comes up with a new theory and the hardware to back it up. Question: Will he or won't he get his government funding? He does, after a novel's worth of theorizing and more endless deduction.

The Gentle Giants of Ganymede: A sequel to *Inherit the Stars*. Aliens make First Contact with a band of scientists out near Ganymede. The aliens turn out to be Very Nice People, as are the scientists. After exhaustive study, and much theorizing the aliens come to Earth. Humans love them. They shake hands with a small boy (on camera) and an old man puts his arm around their shoulders. They tour Earth for a month, then regrettably leave the System following an improbable dream. The slight tinge of tension at the end, implied by the unlikelihood of the alien's goal is robbed by a disquietingly pollyanna final chapter.

In all three books the characters are ciphers, there

for a handy voice to spout the interminable theorizing. The infrequent woman (aka "the love interest") is dragged onstage to serve coffee for a paragraph, or to go on a brief date with one of the scientists.

So, Why did I read all three of them? Not out of compulsion, nor because of a review assignment. I read them because I loved the books and plan to read anything else by Hogan I can get my hands on.

If you remove plot and characterization--and Hogan puts in barely enough to qualify his books as fiction--then you also remove theme and conflict. What we have left is pure scientific speculation.

Hogan's speculations and extrapolations are utterly brilliant. In *Inherit the Stars* his detail was so convincing that Dr. Bevan French (head of the NASA department devoted to the study of extraterrestrial materials) expressed astonishment in my presence at the depth of the man's knowledge of the crust of the Moon. His speculations on an alternative physics in *The Genesis Machine* will keep anyone interested in the subject epoxied to the page. In *The Gentle Giants of Ganymede*, his discussions of evolution, of biology, and the Human Condition are equally breathtaking.

Pretend his books are 'non-fact articles'. Forget your preconceptions about the Purpose of Literature. As far as expansion of knowledge and gloriously manipulated data go, Hogan has no peer.

Pretend his books are Britannica entries of the future. By using the bare mechanics of story-telling convention, (conversation, people entering or leaving rooms, the occasional drink ordered in a bar) he has made his fascinating theories both accessible and painless to assimilate.

--Steve Brown

DEATHBEAST by David Gerrold (Popular Library, 1978, \$1.75)

In his excellent *Dragons of Eden*, Dr. Carl Sagan poses the fascinating suggestion that the thunder-lizards live on in our genetic memory, surfacing in nightmares and other subconscious activities. He hypothesizes not that humankind lived back in the eras of the dinosaurs, but that our memories are passed down from the mammals who were locked in a life and death struggle with the beasts.

So, fresh from careful study of Adrian Desmond's *Hot-Blooded Dinosaurs*, comes David Gerrold with a humdinger of an action-adventure piece of SF, populated with a creature that makes Bruce the shark look like a goldfish. Ripped dripping from Gerrold's goriest nightmares comes the Deathbeast, Tyrannosaurus Rex, to stalk across our imaginations and there wreak wonderful havoc.

Plot: From a future earth (details of which are woven into the book's breakneck pace) come a party of six hunters and two guides to stalk the wild creatures of old for various reasons -- but mostly for thrills. The book starts with their arrival and ends with their return ... lessened in number quite a bit. In between is an exciting tour of prehistoric times, carefully brush-stroked depictions of the characters and their inter-relationships, and their numerous encounters with their nemesis, the Deathbeast who seems to immediately develop a taste for human flesh.

Originally a screenplay, the book retains that structure, madly barreling along with event after mauling event to the harrowing climax. Indeed, everything is gratifyingly visualized, each chomp, each bloody rend of flesh.

My only reservations were two:

The book is fairly predictable. Although it has its surprises, they are small. Gerrold relies mostly on his fast pace and his characterizations to fill the void -- and does so quite nicely, making the book a quite satisfying and enjoyable read, with some educating facts and images thrown in.

Gerrold can't stop from getting too cute in his prose sometimes. Deftly done, true, but it takes away from the overall impact of the quite suspenseful scenes.

Small gripes. Read the book, and let the beasties slinking about in your subconscious up for a breath of fresh air and a bite or two.

The quality of your nightmares will improve.

--Dave Bischoff

ZANDRA by William Rotsler (Doubleday, 1978, \$6.95)

If you've read his excellent "Patron of the Arts," you know what can be expected from a writer of the ability of a William Rotsler. Well, this book isn't it.

Note that this book isn't interesting on its own terms. Basically, it's modernized Edgar Rice Burroughs, but that's a shocking departure for Rotsler. He introduces all the characters to the readers while they are on an airplane, takes it through the Devil's Triangle and crashed them on Zandra, where all the disappearances have been going for centuries. And it's a typically ERB planet, great civilization long over the hill, run by feudalistic despots with antigravity airships and slaves, the latter group for which our protagonists are immediately drafted.

Our protagonists, of course, take immediate action with their modern wits and cunning, as well as their greater strength in the lower gravity, which they made use of to exhibit truly John Carterish fighting abilities. The book then ends right in the middle of their struggle to find a way to return to Earth (the first step of which, of course, is to take over the planet from the dangerous but bungling incompetents running it). The prose has its weak moments, such as the following description of one of the castles: "The entire castle was a very complex structure, very colorful, built of many materials and in many colors."

But the book is actually about as well written as such a book can be and if you like Burroughs' adventure, you'll probably want to pick this up (along with the sequel -- or rather, the second half of the novel) when it comes out in paperback.

I just hope Rotsler can get this out of his system, so he can get back to serious work.

Doug Frazz

STELLAR 4 edited by Judy-Lynn Del Rey (Del Rey, May 1978 \$1.96)

"We Who Stole the Dream" is minor Tiptree. In anyone else's hands this would be the story of their career; a heartbreaking picture of bigotry, loss of innocence, and the death of a thing of beauty -- told in some of the most arresting and economical prose being written today. But Tiptree has written this story before, and better. No Tiptree story should be missed, but this one shouldn't have been written. As I understand it, this (and one other in a forthcoming anthology) is the last of the Tiptree stories written before her cover was so thoughtlessly blown -- giving our best writer a year-long block. Apparently she has worked the block out, and has recently begun writing again, making my future a little rosier.

"Animal Lover" by Stephen R. Donaldson. The Man who wrote the Thomas Covenant trilogy steps into short fiction and away from fantasy. A decent journeyman story about some runaway animal intelligence experiments and some unscrupulous people. The scene with the bunny and the hand grenade is worth the read itself.

"Snake Eyes" by Alan Dean Foster is yet another Flinx story. Action and adventure with the flying snake, some miners, and their mine. Light entertainment, competently crafted candy fiction. One or two taste pretty good, but read too many of them and you can get sick.

"The Last Decision" is a surprisingly interesting story by Ben Bova, a man I usually find unreadable. This is the tale of the Emperor of the Hundred Worlds and his efforts to save a washed-up backwater planet (I bet you can't guess which one) from extinction by nova. Thoughtful and

well-written. I thought that the sentimentality at the end didn't justify the effort (it's expensive to stop a nova), but that's the whole point of the story. You might think differently.

"The Deimos Plague" by Charles Sheffield is an amusing throw-away about a man stowing away to Mars with some pigs, and a plague averted. Sheffield writes well and entertainingly, if not yet with any depth. *Caveat Emptor*: Somewhere in this story is a pun of terrible visage, not for the faint of heart.

"Assassin" is a typical James P. Hogan story. Plot: nil. Characterization: nil. But what breathtakingly detailed speculations. Another crash-course in scientific theorizing by the man who brought you *Inherit the Stars*. This one reads like an extended foot-note to *The Genesis Machine*.

-- Steve Brown

BEST SF STORIES OF THE YEAR (Seventh Annual Collection). Edited by Gardner Dozois. (E.P. Dutton, New York. \$8.95)

This series is the youngest of the three currently published "Best Of The Year" anthologies, not counting the SFWA Nebula Award series which is essentially the same thing, although handled by rotating editors. The other two are, of course, Terry Carr's series from Del Rey and Donald Wollheim's from his own DAW (both of which have common ancestry in the "World's Best SF" series the two co-edited for Ace from 1965 to 1971). Dozois is a capable young writer/editor who is as calm and reserved in print as he is a wildman in person, took over this volume two years ago from Lester Del Rey and has turned it into an admirably adventurous effort. As evidenced in his own painstakingly polished writings, Dozois has a fine ear for style, and his selections, more than either of his competitors, are drawn from among that group of young writers who share his passion for fluid, expressive prose (Ed Bryant, George Martin and Michael Bishop being examples from this volume).

There are eight stories included here, and while this

low number might be taken as a bad value signal by some (the Carr book contains more stories), there is a preponderance of longer stories. Certainly none of them are less than Very Good, and though I might quibble with a selection or two (or an omission), all of Dozois' choiced merit inclusion in a volume with this title.

Racoon Sheldon's "The Screwfly Solution" has already won the Nebula in the Novelette category this year, and stands a pretty good shot at the Hugo as well. Never has the unmasking of a pseudonymous writer paid off so well as it has for Tiptree. Sheldon -- this, courtesy of the rising wave of faddish feminism in science fiction. I find the matter of sexual politics to be a dead issue myself (but I am a male, after all), but would prefer to consider the merits of a story or a writer stripped of political associations. Whether "Screwfly" is a good story is the real question, and while Dozois calls it "unequivocably the best short story of the year" I find too many things about it that bother me to go along with that pronouncement. I think that Sheldon, in her desire to communicate her ideas of the violence inherent in male-female relationships, has allowed didacticism to interfere with the structure of the story, which is a mistake.

The viewpoint character is a male scientist working in Colombia on a study of insect behaviour. The letters he receives from his wife indicate some sort of problem back in the USA, where groups of men are arming themselves, sealing off areas of land and murdering every female in sight. After one particularly frantic letter he decides to grab the first plane he can back to the States. Along with the letter are clippings and material from his friend Barney, whom he knows has been working on the problem. He doesn't bother to read this stuff, and shoves it into his pocket and heads for Miami. He passes a lengthy plane flight (though it is dealt with in one sentence by the author) without wondering what his friend might have to say, and doesn't choose to read it until after he disembarks and himself becomes "infected" by whatever it is that is causing the epidemic of femicide.

I personally don't buy that at all. Am I supposed to believe that a very worried man will not immediately look at something which almost certainly contains pertinent infor-

RECOMMENDED COMPETITORS:

A LOOK AT THE OTHER SF MAGAZINES

by doug fratz

As most of *THRUST*'s readers are undoubtedly aware, *THRUST* is not the only magazine of its kind in the science fiction field. There are many other serious ("sercon") magazines (fanzines) available. All of those reviewed in this column are recommended reading.

LOCUS (\$9.00/year, Locus Publications, P.O. Box 3938, San Francisco, CA 94119) is the oldest and most prominent newsletter in the sf field. It is now past its 200th issue, and although now aimed to a great extent at professionals in the field, is still of the utmost interest to the serious sf fan.

A recent addition to the newsletter field is **FANTASY NEWSLETTER** (\$5.00/year, Paul C. Allen, 1015 West 36th St., Loveland, CO 80537), now in its fourth issue. This newsletter, as its title indicates, puts more emphasis on fantasy, and is a useful supplement to **LOCUS** in that it covers the small press sf and fantasy specialty publishers in much greater depth.

ALGOL (3 issues/\$4.50, Algol Magazine, P.O. Box 4175, New York, N.Y. 10017) is one of the most professional looking magazines in the field, and has also once again become one of the most interesting. The latest issue (#31) contains lengthy material from Harlan Ellison (including his excellent resignation speech from SFWA), Susan Wood on fandom, Vincent DiFate on art, Fred Pohl on

academia and Dick Lupoff's excellent book review column.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW (6\$/#7.50, P.O. Box 11408, Portland, OR 97211) is another oldtime magazine still going strong, and the latest issue (#26) shows great improvement since the editor, Richard Geis, separated his personal and political commentary into a separate magazine. **SFR** still retains its unique "diary format" however, and remains one of the most interesting magazines in the field.

I'm not sure of the present status of **DELAP'S F&FS REVIEW** (12\$/#13.50, P.O. Box 46572, West Hollywood, CA 90046) as the last issue I received was the March/April issue, but hopefully they will be able to get back on schedule. **DFA&SF** is by far the best of the review magazines, and when its being published, it covers everything in the field, with the most useful, interesting and literate reviewing to be found in any field.

There are presently two foreign based magazines of special interest to the sf fan. The are **FOUNDATION** (3\$/#7.50, The Science Fiction Foundation, North East London Polytechnic, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex RM8 2AS, ENGLAND) and **SF COMMENTARY** (5\$/6, Hank and Lesleigh Treliss, 525 West Main, Madison, WI 53703). **FOUNDATION** is an exceedingly professional magazine in trade paperback format, and the best of the English sf magazines. **SF COMMENTARY** is actually an Australian fanzine, and editor Bruce Gillespie has developed it into an excellent one.

At this point I'd like to digress and point out an interesting phenomena. **THE COMICS JOURNAL** (10\$/#6.00, P.O. Box 292, Riverdale, MD 20840) is the comics field's most literate fanzine, and the only one which is on a level of quality comparable to the magazines previously mentioned. And surprisingly (the comics field having been, as a rule, a very bland place), issues of **TCJ** have been having so much controversy in their pages that they make *THRUST* resemble a sewing circle. The sf field is calm compared to

mation about the very thing that would send him rushing home? More logically, I think, the man would've read the stuff (which did, as it turned out, contain key information) right then, and therefore probably would not have decided to hop a plane home and find himself seized by the fierce desire to kill all women. I think Ms. Sheldon was steered by her politics to create a hopeless situation in which the victim of the mania is aware of his sickness and helpless to do anything about it. To accomplish this she has introduced a serious flaw that crumbles the foundation of the second half of her story. Additionally, I found the final line (the bit about the real estate agent) to be either: 1) a very trite conclusion to the story, or 2) out of the realm of my understanding.

Despite my carping, I will not deny that the story has power, this due probably to Sheldon's superlative characterizations and insight into human feelings. (I was particularly taken with her description of the changing emotions in the protagonist's relationship with his wife, an insight she throws away in Sturgeon-like fashion). I must admit that this cynic's gut was twisted by the story a number of times, something that doesn't happen too often. Alice/Racoona/James Sheldon/Tiptree Jr. certainly has proven herself to be a marvelous writer. I only wish she would watch herself more carefully.

John Varley's "In The Hall Of The Martian Kings" is an excellent long story, that, like this year's "The Persistence of Vision" appears to be outside of the Eight Worlds background. This story tells of a Mars expedition that survives the inhospitable environment with the aid of some alien bio-technology that is able to reconstruct objects that have been buried in the ground. As with Varley's other superior stories, "Martian Kings" dazzles the reader with the author's invention while it shows new depths of understanding human nature.

"Harry's Note" is good Sturgeon, as good as anything he has written recently, and so should be reverently received without too much whining and complaining. Who cares that it is really no more than an extended anecdote, or that the wowie-zowie ending is a let-down -- isn't the joyous prose enough? Sturgeon uses phrases like scenery, and introduces all sorts of charmingly needless prop

the comics field these days, a shocking turn of events. I have a theory about this. The comics field is undergoing a definite economic depression, while the sf field is in an economic boom period. Lack of economic security in the comics field is bringing out all the malcontents, while the boom in sf is silencing ours to some extent. If you every had any interest in the comics field, give TCI a try. It's a more interesting field now than it has been for many years.

The first issue of PRETENTIOUS SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY (\$1.50, Michael Ward, P.O. Box 1496, Cupertino, CA 95014) shows a great deal of promise, although it is a very thin issue. It contains good articles by Paul Moslander, Ed Wood and Dick Lupoff. Of interest to the starting or potential sf writer is EMPIRE (\$4/\$4.00, Mark J. McCarr, 2 Leonard Place, Albany, NY 12202), a magazine aimed primarily at how to sell sf, and the interesting problems that can occur. Of special interest in the latest issue (#13) is Scott Edelstein's story of his editorial disasters.

Lastly, I'd like to recommend three that are unpretentiously fanzines, with no pretext of being professional, yet still include some interesting coverage of the sf field. KHATRU (\$4/\$4, Jeffery D. Smith, 1339 Weldon Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21211) is of particular interest to fans of James Tiptree, Jr. (Alice Sheldon) as it's her only contact point with fandom. FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE (75¢, Cliff and Susan Biggers, 1029 Franklin Road, Apt. 3A, Marietta, GA 30067) is an excellent fanzine for book reviews, and worth looking into. And lastly, the latest issue (#4) of FANNY HILL (\$1.00, Fanny Hill Publications, 3815 Whispering Lane, Falls Church, VA 20041), a better-than-expected fanzine by young fan Dan Joy, is of particular note because of the interview with Dave Bischoff.

None of these magazines, of course, are better than THRUST, however ...

-- Doug Fratz

material into the narrative, like one-liners, jokes and little stories that the characters tell. Sturgeon is probably the only writer who can harvest genius out of the seeds of this sort of self-indulgence.

Ed Bryant is a writer who intermittently shows the signs of becoming another talent of Sturgeon's proportions, and "Particle Theory" displays quite well the grace and emotional power his prose is capable of achieving. The story relates the treatment of a man's prostate cancer with a beam of charged sub-atomic particles (not a usual ANALOG story subject), and ties it to a sudden occurrence of three Supernovae in the skies, and the possible death of our own sun as well. Bryant's Nick Richmand faces a very important choice, and he chooses to stop allowing the decisions of life to be made for him, and to make an active effort toward living. Another excellent story, though Bryant's use of a jumbled chronology left me a bit dizzied, and also clouded his point (is there a certain pride in not telling story conventionally?).

I didn't particularly like George Martin's "Bitterblooms" or Howard Waldrop and Steven Utley's "Black As The Pits, From Pole to Pole." Martin, I've usually found, tries too hard to wring my emotions by twisting all the obvious dials. When he wants you to feel a certain way he tends to overweigh his prose and broadcasts his intent to o loudly. I usually recoil from this sort of thing and find myself feeling opposite to the author's desired effect. Such was the case here in the story of a harsh, frozen world and a woman's hard life growing up in it. At the end, when the protagonist Shawn dies in the snow while waiting for the return of a woman from her past, I felt nothing. Did the author mean us to mourn Shawn's failure at recuperating the security of the past? Or were we to nod our heads at the failure of her quest? The Utley/Waldrop story is a rather dry pastiche of Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville, with perhaps an echo of MPL. (It is actually somewhat of a sequel to Frankenstein). I found it well-crafted but overlong.

Closing the book is Spider and Jeanne Robinson's "Stardance," which also occupies the largest chunk of the book. "Stardance" suffers from the same problems as the Martin story, except the Robinsons try even harder and consequently I was even less moved. (As I understand it, Spider did all the actual writing after intensive discussion with his wife Jeanne, who is a professional dancer). The story, told by a cynical and self-pitying video cameraman/director (who used to be a great dancer until he was shot in the hip by a burglar who also killed his girlfriend), tells how Shara Drummond overcomes the problem of her size (dancers must be willowy and sexless, we are told, and Drummond is neither). She accomplishes this by creating the first zero gravity dance. The problem lies in the story's reliance on obvious melodrama, and a lack of subtlety in the pursuit of the manipulation of the reader's emotions. An example: at the end of the story Shara kills herself after dancing in space, using her dance to ward off a threatening group of aliens who apparently communicate by movement. Thus, she has Created Art, and since she can no longer survive in normal gravity, she has also outlived her usefulness to the story. I can almost feel the tangible tugging at my emotions, and the inevitability of all the key elements in the story served as a constant reminder that the Robinsons cannot put off the Sturgeonian they are attempting to. Further, I could neither accept the romanticized image of Art presented here, nor visualize the dancing described (much as Sturgeon fails to convey the sound of music in stories like "Rule of Three" and "The Education Of Drusilla Strange"), nor could I believe that a message could be communicated to a non-humanoid race through dance (gestures and body postures seem to me too cultural and racial - how is an alien without arms to know that one arm raised with an open fist is a sign of peace?). Though the story attempts to achieve something ambitious, I don't think it manages to bring it off. Judging by the success and acclaim it has received I suppose my feelings are in the minority (it will probably have won the Hugo by the time you read this). A novel-length version of the story, using the novella as the opening quarter of the book, has been written and scheduled as an upcoming Quantum release from Dial Press and Dell Books. I understand Spider has tightened it up a

bit, and takes the protagonist through much more interesting changes. I am curious to read it.

Included in the volume also are Dozois' thorough but dull summation of the year in science fiction, and an extensive list of other worthwhile stories first published in 1977. This is an anthology of high quality reading, though I don't think Dozois quite matches Terry Carr for the balance he achieves (there is a three story overlap between the two.) Still, if you don't read the magazines through the year then I know of no better way to keep abreast with the best short fiction being published today than reading this book. Dozois is a courageous enough editor, and I think if his publisher allowed him a bit more room in which to stretch, his annual effort could become as essential as Terry Carr's.

-- Lou Stahlis

LAMARCHOS By Jo Clayton (DAW Books, 1978, \$1.50)

This is the second novel of the Diadem series. The first one, *Jadam From the Stars*, I reviewed here a couple of issues ago, saying that although the author had some first novel problems, I felt she would turn into a fine author and story-teller.

Well, now she has second-novel problems, but I still think she'll turn into a fine author eventually...

This novel fails to circumvent many of the pitfalls to which science fiction novels in a series can fall victim. The story takes place on one planet and spans a shorter time than the first novel, and the pacing seems too slow to hold the interest of the reader. In addition, there is very little real change and development of the protagonist, Aleytys, which is a pity, because she is a potentially powerful character. She possesses an alien (even to her) diadem which gives her erratic super-human powers, and although she discovers a few superficial things about controlling her power, she finds out nothing about herself. And Clayton's first novel problems with hard to follow narrative has still not cleared up completely.

Personally, I think this story should have been only a novel -- the last chapter, which is basically the introduction to the next novel's storyline, looks extremely interesting.

One additional matter perplexes me here. Aleytys is, of course, a very powerful and independent character, and is often portrayed as such. Yet, the author portrays her, in a numerous other situations, as extremely dependent on males and otherwise rather unliberated. Either the author has never heard of Joanna Russ and the whole concept of rights for women, or she is making a very strong statement on the subject. Embarrassingly, I can't decide which. You may want to buy this novel just to read the lead-in to the next one. It looks like it's going to be quite good.

--Doug Fratz

THE MALACIA TAPESTRY by Brian Aldiss (Harper & Row, 1977, \$8.95)

It was about half way through this book when I happened to be talking to a friend who had finished it, and when I asked him if it ever really reached a climax, he said no, it just keeps droning on till the end. Well I finished the book anyway, whereupon I saw my friend's problem. He took a personal dislike to the hero far too early in the narrative to enable him to form a proper empathy with said hero at the proper, gut-wrenching culmination.

This novel is a side of Brian Aldiss I have never seen before, a pseudo-historic, sf/fantasy/romantic theme straining to reveal the heart of the great, universal artistic experience. The prose reminds one somewhat of Lord Byron's *Don Juan*, and if you are unable to appreciate a life of all night partying, grand jests, interlocking conceits, youthful lust, upperclass intrigue (the hero is a social climbing actor) and instantaneous reversals, you may want to set this book aside for when you finally run out of Perry Rhodan. The richness of the style and intricacies of the background material should keep any normal intelligent reader occupied, but without empathy he may never truly discern the plot nor appreciate the actor's ultimate trans-

cendent response to the deaf ear of fate. The hero, Perian de Chirolo, is an arrogant cavalier, a Renaissance man born into a world of businessmen and laborers, beggars and magicians. What he finds out in the end is something I hope never to have to face; but the theme is a great one, a struggle as old as human society, and equally disconcerting. If you spend your nights in an uproar, you might enjoy reading this book during your daily recuperations; you'll fit right in.

There's a lot of sex in it, too.

-- Jeff Schalles

UP THE WALLS OF THE WORLD by James Tiptree, Jr. (Berkeley/Putnam, 1978, \$8.95, also Science Fiction Book Club Edition)

This is Tiptree's first novel, and I can only hope there will be more. It is by far the best hard science fiction book I've read in many years.

Tiptree is at her forte in this novel in the sections characterizing her race of interplanetary energy creatures. The power and brilliance of the characterization and description of this race makes them the most believable and fully realized non-planetary race ever created in science fiction. Just an unbelievably, incredibly good job of writing.

This has my vote for the Hugo for next year. If you read just one of novel this year, make it this one.

--Doug Fratz

WOLFHEAD by Charles L. Harness (Berkeley Medallion Book, Berkeley Publishing Corp., 1978)

A reviewer must take care not to spoil the ending of a story such as *Wolfhead*, because, in fact, its entire actual worth appears only at the ending. Yet it couldn't have been reduced to a short story, it needed the nonsubstantial quest build-up of which it is primarily composed for the climax and epilogue to carry the significance and impact they do. Yes, stylistically this is a very unique work.

Of the story itself I can only speak abstractly and cryptically. It is a heroic tragedy, it deals with inevitable resignation and consuming love, despite the meandering, tiresome quest. Stapledon is the only other sf author to portray so richly the human spirit.

It's an easy story on which to give up. It's virtually nothing all the way through. This is Harness' stylistic device. I shouldn't even reveal that much but perhaps the best favor a reviewer can do for this chillingly moving book, written so oddly, is to pass the word to other readers to persevere. Yes, there's something up ahead. No, you won't know it till it strikes you.

As I say, this is an epic of the human spirit. It does take a certain...sensitivity to appreciate such a theme. So I can't unreservedly recommend all to read this innovative novel, though along with other Harness stories it is among the most noteworthy of sf. But I might suggest a more immediately rewarding story by Harness such as *The Rose* as a test to see if his themes are your bag. Or, if the metaphysics and moral philosophy of (again) Stapledon echo in you.

Space opera chases were never like this.

--Louis A. Morra

JOURNEY by Marta Randall (Pocket Books, 1978, \$1.95)

I admire Randall's lean and lovely prose. Her words roll past with no effort. This novel is no exception. It is a thing of beauty on a stylistic level, and I will never forget her picture of that huge, multi-layered barn.

But it was boring beyond belief.

Journey is an interminable family saga set on a frontier planet that could have been Australia or Civil War South, had *Thorn Birds* or *Gone With the Wind* not already been written. There is nothing here to indicate the necessity for writing this as an SF novel, the odd spaceship or ridiculously convenient nova (which wiped out, off stage, an entire planetary of baddies just as they were about to interfere in an interesting way) just seems out-of-place. I would have put up with it for the sake of



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her prose if the story were interesting, but it isn't. Randall seems afraid to plot. The book has a thirty year span, but Randall refused to allow any plot element to mature, except for the Bad Kid who ran off to return years later and redeem himself -- a cliché right out of the sleaziest of sweet/savage bodice-busters. If only she weren't so serious about it all. I guess I'll have to go back and reread Islands or City of the North and wait patiently for the next one.

Steve Brown

100 GREAT SCIENCE FICTION SHORT STORIES, edited by Isaac Asimov, Martin Harry Greenberg, and Josef D. Olander (Doubleday, 1978, \$8.95)

Well, let's face it, very little of the best science fiction which has been written has been of a length less than, say, two thousand words. In general, one would expect that very seldom could an author manage to present an effective story in so few words. Mostly the reader would feel cheated that, if it is a good story there isn't more, or that if it isn't, he spent his time reading the thing at all. (It could, of course, be argued that a bad short-short is less annoying than a bad long story...)

But enough theorizing. This collection, which is exactly what the title indicates -- minus the "great" -- settles the question quite well. Most short-short sf stories are totally unreadable.

The stories fall into several categories quite nicely. There are the pun ending stories, a la Ferdinand Feghoot. There are the cute little twist ending stories. As a sub-category of both of these, there are the Devil and God stories. There are the stories which are rather pedestrian sf, but with ideas so minor that the author decided it wasn't worth greater length. And there are the stories which are only ideas -- reading just like synopses -- in which the author didn't even bother to write the story. There are stories written with a style so bad, or humor so strained, that the author knew no reader could put up with it for very long.

But I could go on and on.

So what is the tally? Well, here are the strict statistics: Sixty seven stories included in this book are minor throw-offs, bad ideas, poor executions, or for other reasons, totally unreadable. Twenty of the stories are read-

able, but only relative to the previous sixty seven. Ten of the stories are well worth reading, and worked at the length written. And three stories here are actually very good. Each is exactly what a science fiction short story should be.

And the winners are: "The Masks" by James Blish, "Sanity Clause" by Edward Wellen, and "The Happiest Day of Your Life" by Bob Shaw.

So, if you're ever in a library and see this book, spend ten minutes to read these stories. That's the only recommendation I can give to this bad idea for a collection.

--Doug Frazz

THE WORLD IS ROUND by Tony Rothman (Del Rey, 1978, \$1.95)

This is a bad book of the saddest kind. The author is sincere, writes with tremendous enthusiasm, and has done enough homework to do justice to James P. Hogan. His problem lies in not knowing when to stop. By the time you thread your way through the labyrinthine activities of four separate protagonists as they interact with dozens of cultures, sub-cultures, and splinter cultures (none of them interesting), you don't have enough energy left to be amazed by the ingenious planet he has set up. It could have been trimmed (all 447 pages of it) down to a fascinating little short story that just might have ended up on an award ballot somewhere.

--Steve Brown

THE SCIENCE FICTION AND HEROIC FANTASY AUTHOR INDEX by Stuart W. Wells III (Purple Unicorn Books, 1978, \$9.95)

This is an eminently useful and concise reference book listing, by author, every novel or collection published or reprinted since 1945 in the fields of science fiction and fantasy (excluding horror and occult). All significant editions and reissues are listed. And it is amazingly current -- including books published up until June, 1978.

The only gripe I can think of is that the typesetting is rather large, making it easy to read, but making the length of the book twice what it could have been (and therefore the price). But, considering the amount of work involved, and the usefulness of the information, it's still an excellent buy.

And for the price, I'd venture to say that there is no more useful reference book on the market today for the science fiction fan. Paperbound copies are available for

\$9.95 from the publishers, Purple Unicorn Books, 4532 London Road, Duluth, MN 55804. Libraries should consider ordering the hardcover edition for \$15.95.

--Doug Fratz

ALWAYS COME EVENING by Robert E. Howard, illustrated by Keiko Nelson, (Underwood/Miller, 1977, \$10.00) (Available from publisher: Chuck Miller, 239 N. 4th St., Columbia, PA. 17512)

For years, *Always Comes Evening* has been a sought-after collector's item in its original 1957 Arkham House edition, published by Glenn Lord in a 636 copy edition. Next to the original British edition of *Gent From Bear Creek* it is perhaps the rarest of REH volumes.

Chuck Miller and Tim Underwood are to be commended not only for making it available once again, but for doing such a superb job with it. The new edition includes all of the REH verse contained in the original, plus a recently discovered sonnet, re-arranged and re-edited by Glenn Lord, with a new introduction. The typeface used for Howard's poems is newly set and extremely attractive. This is not a cheaply produced difficult to read facsimile.

The book is heavily laced with illustrations and decorations by Japanese artist Keiko Nelson. His work is not in the traditional Japanese vein, but in a modern style, with an eerie quality to it that I find entirely appropriate for Howard's verse. The dust jacket is colorful and eye-catching. Nelson's work makes this an altogether unique and attractive Howard volume.

On the front end-papers are two reproductions of one of REH's earliest poems, "Parody", written at age 15. One is typeset while the other is a facsimile in Howard's handwriting. On a back end-paper is a reproduction of Frank Utpatel's original dust jacket design for the rare Arkham House edition.

It's obvious that a lot of thought and tender loving care went into the production and design of this book on the parts of Underwood and Miller. After experiencing such ripoffs as "Night Images", it is most refreshing to pick up a book like this. Even if you're one of the lucky 600 or so people who own the original, you will want to add this new edition to your collection. At \$10.00, this book is a bargain. A leather-bound edition is also available at \$31, presumably most of which is due to the cost of leather these days.

--Paul C. Allen

THE STORIES AND FABLES OF AMBROSE BIERCE (Stemmer House Publishers Inc., 1978, \$7.95)

I find it difficult to determine how much Ambrose Bierce may or may not have affected the collective American fantasy movement. I would doubt that Tolkien or European writers were much affected -- most of the time. At other times a flash of insight seems to open up in Bierce's writing, as if he somehow touched a bit deeper than his normal abilities would allow. When these moments come Bierce is a truly valuable writer indeed.

The volume in hand was published a few miles from where I live in Owings Mills, by Stemmer House, a small high quality publisher. In one level it is little more than a recompilation of published material. On another it is a fine and useful addition to anyone interested in fantasy. The value comes in the illustrations by Ferebe Streett and the informational introduction by Edward Wagenknecht, who also selected the material.

Briefly, Bierce was interested in the supernatural in somewhat the same way Poe was -- as it might intrude into the everyday world, and not as a world unto itself as a Lovecraft might present it. Having said that, let me assure you that Bierce doesn't write mere imitation of Poe. His tales of war and the West are remarkable in their clarity and brevity -- and also for the frequent use of something we've come to call the "O Henry" ending. Bierce realised early that it might not be necessary to explain quite as much as Poe did in his tales in order to make a story work. It is difficult to review a book like this in terms of

representative stories. Wagenknecht has included over twenty short stories in the first 208 pages of the book and has also tacked on something over 70 of the "Fables" of Bierce; sometimes these are super short stories and at other times they are little more than pithy sayings.

In paper the book costs \$7.95, a hefty price indeed. Yet to the serious fan of fantasy it provides a balanced introduction and a good collection of material, and to the beginner it provides lots of food for thought as well as artwork by the talented Ms. Streett.

In the long run *The Stories and Fables of Ambrose Bierce* is worth owning, or at least giving as a gift and borrowing back. Look for it and other works from this new publisher of unusual material at your bookstore, or write them at: Stemmer House Publishers, Inc. 2627 Caves Rd, Owings Mills, Md. 21117. The effort will be worth your while.

--Steve Miller

ETIDORHPA by John Uri Lloyd (Pocket Books, 1978, \$1.95)

This odd book was first published in 1895. According to the introduction by Neal Wigus, John Uri Lloyd was a pharmaceutical scientist, who paradoxically was also a strong believer in occultism and alchemy. He served as associate editor of the *Pharmaceutical Review* and other professional journals, and wrote a number of other novels.

The body of the novel concerns a man known only as "I-am-the-Man". He joins a secret occult brotherhood and betrays the other members by attempting to give away their secret doctrines. In retaliation, he is abducted and banished forever from the world that he knew. He is compelled to embark upon a journey through endless caverns to the Earth's hollow interior, where he finally finds enlightenment.

This is set in a framework in which I-am-the Man, now an old man with supernatural powers, relates the above story to a sceptical listener named Llewellyn Drury.

Unfortunately, the book is not so much a story as a series of lectures and philosophical arguments. I-am-the-Man is lectured to by the guides who accompany him on his journey concerning the various underground wonders they encounter. He in turn lectures to and argues with Drury, in his attempts to convince him of the authenticity of his story. These explanations and arguments are extremely long-winded and take up the major part of the book. As an example, chapter 20 is entirely devoted to an explanation of how fresh water may be extracted from the sea water without evaporation (to explain a vast subterranean freshwater lake). A simple experiment is described in detail to prove the point, and several diagrams are included so the reader may try the experiment himself. All of this may be interesting to some, but it does not make for good storytelling.

There are some nice things about the book. Lloyd can be inventive in places. There is an effective sequence in which I-am-the-Man is aged prematurely by his captors in a few moments. There is a slimy-skinned and eyeless humanoid who guides him through the caverns. There are forests of colossal and colorful fungi, and an immeasurable lake of mirror-like stillness across which they travel in a boat powered by the energy of "pure motion". The most powerful part of the book is a long hallucinatory sequence in which he meets grotesquely deformed drunkards who try to induce him to drink, and in which he meets the goddess Etidorhpia.

The book is profusely illustrated with halftone reproductions of what must have been extremely good-looking color plates in the original edition. It is also full of such things as reproductions of I-am-the-Man's original manuscript, all sorts of diagrams, 22 pages of (I assume) contemporary reviews, and an item on Lloyd's pharmaceutical library in Cincinnati.

As a curiosity, this book is certainly one of the most curious. As a work of fiction, however, it is a total failure.

--Lee Weinstein

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